Dudley
CHRONICLE

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£2m TO CREATE ALL-IN-ONE HUBS

Report by David Cosgrove

DUDLEY Council has given the green light for around £2 million to be spent on creating new community hubs in the borough that will bring different services together.

The move agreed by the council cabinet comes as Dudley Council looks to make multi-million pound savings by selling off buildings and merging services on single sites.

The multi-purpose hubs are part of the authority's 'innovative transformation plans' in the face of Government funding cuts.

Council Leader Pete Lowe, said: "Our work to be a community council would go to a completely new level with these ambitious plans to transform how the council works in the heart of communities.

"The financial challenges we face due to the national cuts are massive but by working together with our community we know we can establish services which will help people to be more self-sufficient.

"Whilst we will continue to make service savings where possible and encourage an 'every penny counts' culture at the authority we are also keen to explore this bigger and more innovative approach which we hope can generate tens of millions of pounds worth of savings."

The council will look to sell off non-essential council buildings as part of the ground-breaking scheme.

Invest

Council bosses have already set out plans to save £21m over the next three years, which will take total savings to nearly £100m since 2010.

However, due to continued Government funding cuts, finance bosses are still forecasting a shortfall of close to £50m.

Councillors agreed to set aside £2m to fund the invest-to-save Transforming for the Future scheme which will help to plug the £50m shortfall.

A full review of all council and wider public sector buildings across the borough will be carried out under the proposals.

This will identify suitable locations for the community hubs and highlight property which could be sold to bring in additional council income whilst providing regeneration opportunities for private investors.

It is hoped the hubs, which would cover a wide range of council services, as well as other partner organisation services, would help make communities more resilient and self-sufficient with less reliance on council services.

Hubs located in towns across the borough would provide a focal point for residents and local councillors to work together. Services such as children's centres, housing services, community safety as well as police, fire and voluntary sector services could all be involved.

SANTA GETS A WARM BLACK COUNTRY WELCOME

Santa Dave gets a warm welcome from friendly elves Sarah Dibb, left, and Hayley Albright at the Mad As A Hatter tea rooms

HE may not have been welcome at a Birmingham shopping centre, but Santa was asked to bring festive cheer to a party shop in the Black Country

David Upson, aged 69, from Oldbury, known locally as Santa Dave, said he was disappointed that during his annual trip around the area to bring festive cheer he was turned away from the Bullring shopping centre by security guards.

But Mr Upson aimed to inject some festive fun with regular visits to tea rooms and crafts venue Mad As A Hatter in Bearwood in the run up to Christmas Day. Mr Upson, a retired land surveyor, has been dressing up as Santa for the last 16 years and regularly visits Birmingham's German market in costume.

He said: "I thoroughly enjoy playing Santa and love the Mad as a Hatter shop, I've been involved with them for as long as they've been opened.

" I love talking to the kids and making this time of year extra special for them. The shop is a lovely, friendly and quirky place and I see it as a home from home.

"It's a great place to bring Santa season to Bearwood and I'm sure the kids are going to be very excited."

Owner of Mad As A Hatter Hayley Albright said: "Dave spends a lot of time with us in the shop and has an incredibly good heart. He does so much for charity without charging anything."

Sophie Diner, Bullring spokeswoman, said: "Our customers are welcome to walk through the centre in costumes. However, if any of our visitors in costume wish to engage with other customers' children for photos, there are certain procedures that need to be applied."

COURT

Boy charged over towpath robbery

A 15-YEAR-OLD boy has been charged with robbery following an attack on a canal towpath in Netherton.

The youth, who is from Netherton and cannot be named for legal reasons, was arrested on December 14 and has been charged with two counts of robbery.

He was remanded in custody at Dudley Magistrates Court last week and was due to appear at the same court this week.

It comes after CCTV footage was released by police last week after a young couple were targeted along the canal near Cradley Road.

COUNCIL

Public having their say on cuts budget

MORE than 1,500 people have already had their say on Dudley Council's controversial budget plans.

The authority is looking to make £20 million worth of cuts over three years.

Under the proposals Dudley Museum and Art Gallery would close and up to 275 jobs would will be axed. Library opening hours could be cut with public toilets, dog bins and gritting lorries also in the firing line.

Proposals also include a council tax increase of just under two per cent.

TECHNOLOGY

Festive broadband boost for thousands

MORE than 6,000 businesses and households in the Black Country are now able to access high-speed fibre broadband as part of a rolling programme from BT and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Black Country Broadband Project said parts of Dudley and neighbouring Black Country boroughs are among the latest areas to benefit. These include Halesowen North, Blackheath, Langley, Rowley, Bristnall, Tividale and parts of Oldbury.

Engineers have so far installed more than 90 fibre broadband road-side cabinets.

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Dudley CHRONICLE

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Sir Lenny sad to see Hippodrome go

Sir Lenny Henry: 'a shame'

CAMPAIGNERS' efforts to save Dudley Hippodrome have won support from Sir Lenny Henry, who has declared that demolishing the landmark venue on Castle Hill would be 'a shame'.

The Comic Relief founder said the only way he could support the bulldozing of the under-threat building would be if Dudley Council built something better in its place.

Sir Lenny was shocked to hear the authority wanted to replace the Hippodrome with an expanse of landscaped open space.

Sir Lenny said: "I am not part of a campaign or anything, but if the Hippodrome is being knocked down then that's a shame. Unless it's going to be something better."

The comedians' comments came as the Friends of Dudley Hippodrome are gearing up for a crucial few weeks. The Friends has been given until the end of the month to put a 'realistic' package forward for taking over the building and saving it from the wrecking ball.

Veteran comic Alan Smith, best known as Aynuk, has also called for the venue to be spared. r Smith, aged 78, said it was after seeing Laurel and Hardy tread the boards at the Dudley theatre in 1946 that he had decided 'ter mek folk loff'.

Mr Smith, who first entered the Hippodrome as an eight-year-old, said: "It will be sad for me as an entertainer to see it go. The inspiration that I got from it was to be a comedian and eventually bring Aynuk & Ayli to life.

"It all came from my childhood visit to see Laurel and Hardy. I can still recall the show, its impact on me and how it set me on the path I had, because of the Hippodrome I've had so many great Black Country nights."

Young children given terror attack advice

FIND cover from gunfire, tot up casualty numbers and watch out for backpacks, knives and explosives.

This was the chilling advice given to children as young as five years old at a St John Ambulance cadets group in the Black Country.

St John Ambulance says the letter was handed out 'in error'. The charity has apologised for any upset caused.

Youngsters were handed a letter at the St John Ambulance Badger Sett cadets in Sedgley Road, Sedgley, telling them how to react in the event of a potential terror attack. Up to 30 youngsters, aged from five to 16, were given the two-sided A4 document.

It references the Paris attacks and explains that 'terrorists can strike anywhere at any time'. The letter contains guidance on what action to take 'if you find yourself involved in an incident involving roaming gunmen who may also use explosives and/or knives, as well as firearms'.

The letter warns: "The current threat level in the UK is severe, which means that an attack is highly likely."

It explains how to spot different types of guns and offers advice on hiding from terrorists and monitoring their manoeuvres.

Hostages

Gemma Clark, aged 32, from Tipton, said she was stunned when her six-year-old daughter started reading the letter out from the booster seat in the back of her car on the way home from the venue.

"I heard her mention the word 'terrorist' and then she started talking about big and small guns," she said. "I was mortified. I read the letter myself and just couldn't believe what I was reading.

"Does a six-year-old really need to know that terrorism is rife? She used to love going to cadets but doesn't want to go anymore. She thinks people with guns are going to turn up."

St John Ambulance spokeswoman Bijal Patel said: "We apologise for any upset caused. The letter was given to the Badgers in error. This should not have happened.

"We have set out clearly for all our Badger and Cadet leaders what information is appropriate to pass on to our young people to prevent this from happening again."

Zoo is hoping for a tiger mom

Dudley Zoo Sumatran tigress Daseep is regarded as vital for the future of the endangered big cats

BIG cat keepers have started keeping an extra close eye on Sumatran tigress Daseep, looking for early signs of pregnancy.

Daseep and Dudley Zoo's three-year-old male Joao are paired as part of an international conservation project for one of the world's most critically endangered species.

Keepers are monitoring Daseep on a weekly basis in the hope they'll be celebrating the birth of precious tiger cubs in 2016.

Daseep is ranked as the world's second most important female in the genetic pool for this rare sub-species, which now numbers fewer than 400 in the wild.

Mating

Section Leader Jay Haywood said: "Our tigers have been mating in recent weeks and because we are so keen to breed this critically endangered species we have decided to monitor Daseep regularly.

"We will be weighing her every Monday and regulating her diet to make sure she eats the same amount of food each week. That way, if there is any variation in her weight it could be an indication of her being pregnant.

"We'll also be taking pictures of her belly each week so we can quickly spot any change in its shape. We are keeping our fingers crossed it could lead to some amazing news next year."

Mental health services are discussed at MP's forum

THE challenges facing mental health care in the future have been discussed at a forum hosted by a Black Country MP.

The event at Lapal House in Halesowen featured representatives from a range of organisations and service users who discussed ideas of how to tackle some of the major issues facing mental health care.

These included ways of improving clinical responses to those in crisis, how to further engage carers in the treatment of those they care for and how further peer-to-peer support can be used.

The event was chaired by charity Re-Think Mental Illness' national Director for External Affair, Brian Dow.

Experience

Rowley Regis and Halesowen MP James Morris, who organised the forum, said: "I wanted to organise a local mental health forum because I think it is really important that we have these conversations.

"One in four people will experience mental ill-health at some point during their life and I want to know what local people feel should be done to help shape future services."

The event was attended by more than 20 people from organisations such as Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, Dudley Mind, Re-think Mental Illness Carers Group, local councillors and a GP.

Toaster caught fire in kitchen

AN elderly woman has thanked emergency crews and her neighbours for helping her after a toaster burst into fire in the kitchen of her Lower Gornal home.

Marian Hollyhead, aged 85, was confronted with a kitchen filled with smoke after she had left the room briefly.

Her neighbours quickly rushed to her aid and firefighters from Dudley and Brierley Hill were soon on the scene, although the fire was out by the time crews arrived.

She said: "My neighbours and the firefighters were brilliant, the firefighters were very considerate."

Her neighbour Frank Gough, 54, came to Ms Hollyhead's aid, after she went downstairs from her first-floor flat for help.

House and stables are sold at auction

THE Coach House, The Mews and former stables on Bridgnorth Road, Stourton, sold for £275,000 in CP Bigwood's property auction at Villa Park.

Land adjacent to 30 Russell Street, fronting Nelson Street, Dudley, sold for £23,000.

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More than 600 jobs saved in Caparo deal

A FURTHER 623 jobs have been saved at collapsed industrial firm Caparo after a deal was sealed by administrators.

The remaining 10 businesses in the Caparo Industries Group – including seven in the Black Country– have been sold.

Jobs at businesses based in Willenhall, West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Cradley Heath, Dudley and Oldbury have been saved.

Administrators confirmed the businesses had been sold to the Gupta family, whose interests include the SIMEC and Liberty House groups.

Union officials called the sale 'excellent news' helping to put workers' minds at rest in the run up to Christmas.

Among the businesses sold is Clydesdale Jones, Caparo Modular Systems and Caparo Advanced Composites, in Willenhall, where 142 jobs have been saved. At Caparo Precision Strip JB&S Lees, in Albion Road, West Bromwich, 170 workers' jobs have been saved.

In total 29 jobs have been protected at West Bromwich-based business Caparo Drawn Products and Fairbright Wire, in Phoenix Street. Administrators confirmed 123 positions have been preserved at Caparo Aluminium Bridge, in Bridge Street, Wednesbury, too.

Also sold is CMT Engineering, in Corngreaves Road, Cradley Heath, made up of tube fittings, dynamics, clamps and insulation businesses, where 40 have been saved. Six jobs have been saved at Caparo Forging, in Marriott Road, Dudley, and 23 jobs at the group headquarters in Oldbury.

Matthew Hammond, Midlands region chairman for PwC and Caparo's lead administrator said: "We are delighted to have completed the sales. It is great news for the Midlands and the key manufacturing sites, particularly with so many skilled staff in these industries being given security at this time of year. This has been a complex and challenging assignment."

GMB union official, Russell Farrington, said: "This is excellent news for the West Midlands coming up to Christmas. Over half of the workforce has been saved."

'Ambitious' homes plan is needed for borough

A SENIOR Dudley housing chief has called upon Dudley Council to be 'as ambitious as it can be' when considering the borough's plans for the needs of future generations.

In October new figures were revealed that barely half the number of homes needed in the Black Country and Staffordshire had been built over the past four years.

The target was missed by a massive 8,000 homes.

Dudley Council cabinet member Councillor Gaye Partridge was confident Dudley was striving to build new homes and the standards of the housing will be drastically improved.

She said: "Housing in Dudley should be as ambitious as the council will allow it to be.

"In the consultation period for the next ten weeks have a great opportunity to shape housing for the next generation.

"We have 23,000 housing tenants across the borough and the issues of private and public housing will be strongly discussed before the next committee meeting takes place in January."

The figures from the National Housing Federation suggested that Dudley needed to build 2,510 houses, but had only built 1,620. But Dudley Council say they built 2,287, a shortfall of just 223 as opposed to 890.

Some of the new housing on the site of the Guest Hospital will address the shortage, as would a new scheme for 900 homes on former industrial land in Coseley.

MP calling for wages inquiry

A BLACK Country MP has demanded a Government inquiry into allegations of poor working conditions at retailer Sports Direct.

Ian Austin, Labour MP for Dudley North, called on the Government to act during a debate in the House of Commons.

Sports Direct has been accused of paying thousands of workers hourly rates that are below the minimum wage following an undercover investigation. The company has denied this.

In response, Nicholas Boles, minister for state at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, said he would not comment on individual employers but said the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate would follow-up every complaint it receives.

Air views to the police at forum

VILLAGE residents can air their views at a police forum being held in Wordsley on Wednesday, January 20.

The hour-long meeting will be at Wordsley Green Community Centre from 7.30pm.

Developers want to build on school site

FOUR developers have submitted bids to transform the site of a derelict former school in Stourbridge.

The old Longlands School, owned by Birmingham Metropolitan College (B-Met), closed four years ago. Since then it has been targeted by vandals.

Neighbours supported by Stourbridge MP Margot James have called for the site to be brought back into use.

Firms were asked to register their interest in developing the buildings and now the college is reviewing the proposals – and all are expected to be for housing.

Conservative MP Ms James has written to residents near to the Brook Street site telling them that four developers have been chosen to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

She said: "Further information and details regarding the specifics of the bids launched by these four developers will be submitted to the site's marketing agents imminently.

"Unfortunately, no bids from residential care providers were received when the site was advertised by B-Met.

"I understand the site is considered too small to accommodate a modern residential care facility.

Future

"Therefore any future development is likely to be for housing of some sort."

Ms James said she had been reassured bids will only be considered where 'the developer can guarantee any traffic created by the building of new homes can be contained on site'.

She added that any chosen developers must also 'aim to retain as much as possible of the historic locally listed buildings'.

John Starmer, director of estates and capital projects at B-Met, said: "We will be taking our recommendations to the board for approval in the New Year."

The school opened in 1912 and during the 1990s merged with the former High Park School. The buildings were brought back into use by Stourbridge College, which later merged with B-Met.

The buildings closed after the opening of a £12 million creative industries complex in Brierley Hill.

Last years arsonists started two fires at the old school and security was stepped up at the site.

Emma Parkes, left, presents the framed Christmas print to Phoebe Houghton at Netherton C of E Primary School watched by proud parents Nicholas and Emma

Phoebe wins with a festive snowman

SIX-YEAR-OLD Phoebe Houghton has won the Dudley Chronicle Christmas Card Challenge with her drawing of a snowman.

Phoebe's image has been turned into a set of Christmas cards.

Back in October pupils at Netherton C of E Primary School were invited to create designs for the competition and were sponsored by local businesses.

The Chronicle published the entries and readers voted for their favourite, with Phoebe's proving the most popular.

Phoebe with her proud mum and dad Emma and Nicholas received a framed reproduction of her card and a set of the cards to send to their friends and family.

The Chronicle also donated £50 towards school funds.

Headteacher Joanne Robinson thanked The Chronicle for choosing Netherton C of E Primary as the participating school.

Phoebe's entry sponsor was Fine Line Paving. The presentation was made by Chronicle advertisement sales supervisor Emma Parkes.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Election decision in the new year

A DECISION on a by-election following the death of a long-serving Dudley councillor will not be made until the new year.

Mary Roberts, who had represented the St James's ward since 2007, died last month after a long illness. Councillor Roberts, who was re-elected to the ward in 2011 and in May this year, was vice-chairwoman of the authority's audit and standards committee.

Sarah Norman, chief executive and electoral returning officer at Dudley Council, said no decision would be made until 2016.

Normal service will be resumed

PEOPLE in Dudley are being advised about the changes to the housing support drop-in service over the festive season.

Housing services launched the housing support drop-in service in 2009 to assist anyone who needs assistance to maintain their independence.

The walk-in drop in service will not be available across the borough again until January 4, with the exception of the Hope Centre, which will be closed until January 6.

Residents can call the housing support team on (01384) 812504 for help.

Decision due on college building

PROPOSALS for a £12 million building at Dudley College have been recommended for approval by council planners.

The new Dudley Advance II would be built alongside its namesake Dudley Advance at the college's site in the town if it is given the green light.

The 37,000 sq ft centre includes workshops, classrooms, project spaces, resource areas, welfare and support facilities around a four-storey building called The Hanger.

Social enterprises get together to network

TWELVE social enterprises from across Dudley borough took part in a networking event.

The Changing Landscape of Social Enterprises meeting was at Brierley Hill Civic Hall. Speakers included Dudley Council leader Pete Lowe, chief executive of Dudley Council for Voluntary Services Andy Gray, and Dudley North MP Ian Austin.

Councillor Lowe said: "As a community council we are absolutely committed to encouraging social enterprises."

Christingle at church

A CHRISTINGLE service is taking place at a Dudley church on Christmas Eve to raise money for a children's charity. The family favourite service is being held in aid of The Children's Society at St Peter's Church in Kent Street, Upper Gornal, and starts at 6pm on December 24.

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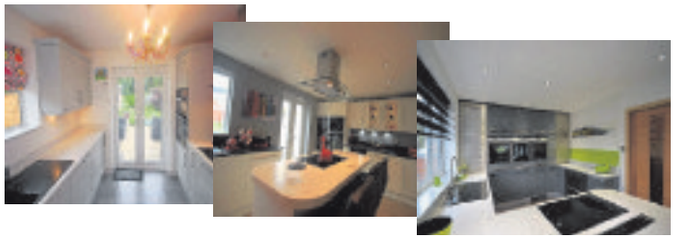

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YOU really must excuse the older generation for not joining the kids in punching the air in celebration as Tim Peake begins his tour of duty on the International Space Station. One newspaper's science writer, who looks about 12, trills that this is "a giant leap in British space exploration." Let's keep it in perspective, eh? Major Tim is 250 miles high. In 1969 we watched man land on the moon which is 250,000 miles away. In 1971 and 1972 astronauts used the Lunar Roving Vehicle. That's right, kids. More than 40 years ago, blokes were driving a car on the moon. Back then we assumed that by 2015 we'd have colonies on Mars, but the money ran out. So while a 250-mile hop into orbit is as courageous and inspiring as ever, let's not fool ourselves. The giant leap into space is still on the drawing board.

AND excuse us, too, for being old-duffery and unhysterical about the new blockbuster, Star Wars: The Force Awakens. I dare say it is brilliant. And yet after so many Star Wars films we all know more or less what to expect. So let me take you back to an encounter with the utterly unexpected, to the third row in the stalls in a cinema in Lewisham in 1977 when the original Star Wars burst upon the wide, wide screen and our little gang was utterly gobsmacked. What a night that was. To this day I cannot see the damaged C3PO spilling Princess Leia's message: "Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope" without blinking away a tear.

WHAT is it with ghosts in TV dramas these days? In River (BBC1), the detective was haunted by his dead colleague. In The Bridge (BBC4) a cop is haunted by his missing, presumed dead, wife and kids. And then Luther (BBC1) returned this week and blow me if our hero (Idris Elba) isn't chatting with the shade of his murdered buddy Justin (Warren Brown). Shakespeare would have loved it but how odd to see so many ghosts in the 21st century.

THE British Veterinary Association warns that the fad for feeding dogs and cats on vegetarian food could damage their health. That may well apply to dogs who tend to wolf down anything you put in front of them. But cats are fussy. Once denied its red meat, your moggie may turn into something quite unexpected – a pedestrian. If you won't feed Tiddles what she wants, there is always some sucker down the road who will. Next thing you know, Tiddles is living three streets away, under the new name of Fluffy and has entirely forgotten you, and your nut puree.

"TRUMP loses wind farm legal challenge." Best headline of the week.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Police 'fail to identify young at-risk'

WEST Midlands Police is failing to protect children from abuse and checks on sex offenders are not being carried out, a damning report says.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has demanded further action after inspectors found: Officers failing to recognise children at risk of exploitation despite clear warning signs; lack of training resulting in 'poor investigations'; 250 sex offender checks not carried out. Also listed: Year-long delays for analysis of computers and other electronic devices in a huge backlog; children missing more than 10 times without any action to protect them and youths unnecessarily kept overnight in cells.

Seventeen out of 21 cases of child sex exploitation looked at by inspectors were deemed to be 'inadequate' or 'required improvement'. The revelations led to West Midlands MEP Bill Etheridge to ask: "What the hell is going on?"

But West Midlands Police says it is already taking action to address concerns with how it handles cases of child sexual abuse. Assistant Chief Constable Carl Foulkes, who heads the force's public protection units, said senior officers were also acting on two other reports produced by inspectors relating to domestic violence and vulnerable victims.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary said the force was improving how it dealt with protecting children but raised concerns and issued a list of recommendations for senior officers to address.

ACC Foulkes said: "I welcome this scrutiny."

More needs to be done to protect our children

Report by Rob Golledge

MORE needs to be done to ensure children in the West Midlands are protected from sexual abuse, a police inspector has said

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Wendy Williams said West Midlands Police has improved how it deals with vulnerable children, but has warned that some youngsters are still at risk.

She said the force had 'partially achieved' addressing concerns previously raised by inspectors last year and praised bosses. She also highlighted good examples of investigations.

But her report found that not all officers had the right training, sex offenders were not being checked as regularly as they should, and long delays were caused in analysing electronic devices and with the Crown Prosecution Service.

She said: "It is clear from this follow up inspection West Midlands Police has made progress in particular areas since our initial inspection. We were encouraged to find a clear commitment to improving child protection services, which is reflected in the significant increase in officers and staff in public protection units.

"We also found good examples of investigations by the force, particularly when children were identified as being at further risk of immediate harm.

Inconsistent

"Despite these encouraging signs, there is still work the force needs to do to improve as child sexual exploitation is still dealt with inconsistently across the force area, although the situation is getting better.

"The response to children who regularly go missing from home also requires further improvement, although inspectors were pleased to see that in most cases officers and staff understood the link between children who regularly go missing and sexual exploitation.

"We have asked West Midlands Police to provide us with an updated action plan, to see how it will incorporate the findings in our report into the work it is already doing.

"Depending on its response, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary may revisit the force again."

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "We recognise the recommendations in this report and will continue to work with our partners to deliver on these. Protecting children is an absolute priority of mine and West Midlands Police.

"I have made it a priority to set up multi-agency safeguarding hubs in each local authority. Three have been set-up so far and plans are in place for the rest of the force area.

"West Midlands Police is now publishing a summary of data on child sexual exploitation to bring this issue out into the open. This is a serious report with important recommendations that I will hold the police to account to deliver."

Responding to the report, Wolverhampton South East MP Pat McFadden said: "After everything that has been exposed about child sexual abuse in recent years it is very important that the police and all the agencies involved learn from what has gone wrong in the past.

"I think efforts are being made and those should be acknowledged, but where the report makes criticisms or identifies gaps it is essential there is an open-minded and full response.

"Protection of children is a top priority and the cases reported in recent times show that many of the children subjected to abuse have been failed by the state as well as abused by others."

Walsall North MP David Winnick, a senior member of the Home Affairs select committee, added: "The good news undoubtedly is the recognition that there has been improvement in this important aspect of policing.

"However, concerns have been raised and it is essential the police act on this and the appropriate remedies are taken as soon as possible.

And Dudley South MP Mike Wood said: "While I'm pleased Her Majesty's inspectors found some improvements, when it comes to protecting vulnerable children from some of the most evil crimes, nothing but the best can be good enough."

Lonely and vulnerable – child sexual abuse victim (posed by a model)

Housing is proposed at former brickworks

THE site of an historic Brierley Hill brickworks could be transformed into a multi-million pound housing estate under new plans.

Outline plans for the Harris and Pearson Brickworks site have been earmarked for approval by council planners. The Grade II-listed offices have already been restored under a separate scheme.

Developer Alvin Lindley has applied for outline access permission for the site in Brettell Lane, which could pave the way for dozens of homes.

Councillor Zafar Islam said any new homes in the borough should be welcomed. He added: "It's good that they're looking to sort the issue of access out first, because that location needs good quality access. It's near a busy road so the safety for residents, motorists and pedestrians is very important."

A report for the council's planning committee raises concerns about the noise impact on future residents but says this would not be enough to refuse the plan.

It states: "The main areas of noise concern are from vehicle transporters using the service road of Brettell Lane Industrial Estate during unsociable hours, and the intermittent activation of an intruder alarm that protects a vehicle storage area.

"These issues would be likely to lead to complaints from future residents on the development site and conflict between them and the existing industrial uses. They are insufficient to justify refusal of the application."

New hospice chief arrives in March

A BLACK Country hospice charity has announced the appointment of a new chief executive.

Claire Marshall, currently commercial director and deputy chief executive of Birmingham St Mary's Hospice, will take up her post at Compton Hospice in March.

She will join Compton Hospice following a 21-year career in the voluntary sector which has included roles at Sue Ryder Care, Cancer Research UK and Air Ambulance. Mrs Marshall said: "I am thrilled to have been offered the opportunity to lead Compton Hospice, a charity which has a wide range of services and a wonderful reputation for delivering exceptional care in the local community."

Ron Middleton will retire in March after 18 years as chief executive.

Town weddings venue fails to sell at auction

A VENUE in Dudley that has been used for weddings and conferences failed to sell at auction despite a bid of £649,000. The Prince Banqueting Suite is still on the market after failing to sell during the auction at Aston Villa's Villa park ground.

£100k will go towards help for domestic abuse victims

DUDLEY Council has received a £100,000 grant to help victims of domestic abuse start a safer new life.

The authority was one of the 43 councils nationwide who have been allocated a share of £3.5 million special funding, following successful bids to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The cash will help fund additional bed spaces across the borough for victims who need a home, while providing enhanced security measures linked to specialist support services.

It will also modernise existing refuge accommodation to include ensuite facilities and the provision of legal advice for households who wish to remain safely in their existing home.

Impact

Housing boss at Dudley, cabinet member Councillor Gaye Partridge said: "Domestic violence has a real impact upon people's lives and it is important that support is available. This additional funding will enable both Dudley Council and the Churches Housing Association of Dudley and District, and other partners, to provide additional help to individuals and families when they need it and it is appropriate to their own circumstance."

A total of £52,000 will go to the churches association and £48,000 to the council.

Anyone who needs help or advice relating to domestic abuse can visit the partnership's website at www.dudleysafeandsound.org

Vandals destroy youth camp hut

THIEVES ransacked a youth organisation's base near Kinver and then burned it to the ground.

High Acres Woodcraft Folk is used by youngsters from Kingswinford, Stourbridge and beyond, and has stood for nearly 50 years.

Heartbroken Bob Sandall, 75, founded the group 47 years ago and built the wooden hut with his own hands.

The structure was razed to the ground by the blaze in the early hours of December 15. Leaders say it could now cost up to £10,000 to replace.

Mr Sandall said: "Thousands of children have camped there and enjoyed the facilities. But now it's just a heap of rubbish. I can't understand why this has happened.

Church hosting an organ recital

MUSIC fans can see in the new year with an organ recital, taking place at a Wordsley church on Sunday, January 3. Paul Carr will be performing at Holy Trinity Parish Church on High Street at 3pm and admission is free.

Hospital experts back from African trip

A TEAM of heart and lung experts from Birmingham Children's Hospital has returned from an inaugural trip to South Africa to share their expertise on using life-saving equipment.

The five-day visit to the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town was organised as part of a planned longer-term collaboration to introduce and develop a new service in South Africa's only specialist paediatric centre.

Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is technique of providing both cardiac and respiratory support to persons whose heart and lungs. Used in intensive care medicine, the specialist ECMO machine provides an artificial heart and lung function for young patients, allowing organs to rest and heal.

Since starting its own ECMO service in 2006 more than 80 children and young people have received this type of intensive care treatment at Birmingham Children's Hospital, designated as the UK's only centre of excellence by the international Extracorporeal Life Support Organization. It is hoped the development of the ECMO service in Cape Town – the first for children in Africa – will lead to a cardiac transplant service.

Tim Jones, paediatric cardiac surgeon and Birmingham Children's Hospital ECMO service lead, was joined by Margaret Farley, hospital ECMO co-ordinator, Gail Faulkner, ECMO co-ordinator from Leicester's Glenfield Hospital and Bob Bartlett, who is credited with developing the technology.

Mr Jones, who has been a heart surgeon at Birmingham Children's Hospital for 10 years, said: "The link-up with the Red Cross War Memorial Hospital is something we've been working on for a while after a member of their team spent some time working with us here. It was fantastic to make such a worthwhile trip to South Africa to share knowledge and help them develop their own life-saving ECMO service, intended as a beginning to a potential transplant programme, which is hugely exciting.

"We certainly learned a lot from the team over there, which faces different challenges to ourselves when it comes to caring for children and young people. We're looking forward to further developing our partnership in the months and years ahead."

MP calls for air duty cut to boost economy

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has stepped up his campaign to cut Air Passenger Duty in a bid to boost regional airports such as Birmingham.

The devolved governments in Scotland and Wales are planning to cut the duty, which could leave regional airports in England at a competitive disadvantage.

Mr Austin has tabled a series of urgent Parliamentary questions challenging the Chancellor George Osborne to set out the impact higher Air Passenger Duty will have on Birmingham International Airport and businesses in places like Dudley.

The MP wants the Government to back proposals to match the cut for non-congested airports in England to offer local people cheaper flights and boost economic growth in the regions.

He said: "The Government is running out of time to intervene before Wales and Scotland cut air taxes and put airports like Birmingham at a competitive disadvantage."

Afford

"Cutting Air Passenger Dutyf or regional airports would help local people afford a well-earned break at the same time as boosting the local economy."

Meanwhile, Birmingham International Airport is on course for a record-breaking year after nearly 700,000 passengers passed through its terminal in November.

The West Midlands gateway to the world is expected to reach a total of 10 million passengers this year, making 2015 the busiest in the airport's 77-year history.

And bosses are already predicting another record-breaker in 2016, with a string of airlines lined up to carry even more passengers in and out of Birmingham on new routes.

November's passenger figure of 693,033 was 7.1 per cent up on the same month a year ago, with long-haul flights up 21.4 per cent.

Paul Kehoe, chief executive of Birmingham Airport, said: "November's figures are extremely encouraging particularly in regard to long haul services which are increasingly in demand.

"We expect December to also be very strong as we welcome passengers over the busy holiday period. If December turns out to be another record-breaking month it will be the eleventh one this year, which is fantastic news."

Homes project starts at hospital site

DUDLEY PATRICK MULVANEY COPYRIGHT EXPRESS & STAR PIC 14/12/2015 Pictures from the

DEMOLITION work has begun at a former hospital site in Dudley as part of an £18 million housing project.

Developer Wates Living Space has started to overhaul the Guest Hospital plot in Tipton Road, where 157 homes will be built.

Work on the housing is due to start in the new year with construction being carried out by Wates, alongside Dudley Council and the Homes and Communities Agency. The scheme expected to be completed in summer 2019.

Two historic buildings at the hospital – the administration block and the porter's lodge – will be retained and converted into homes as part of the project.

A total of 118 homes will be sold while 39 of them will be available for council tenants.

Joanne Jamieson, managing director at Wates Living Space Homes, said: "Work is progressing well and we're looking forward to bringing elements of this historic building and surrounding area back to use, for it to play a key role in providing affordable housing for people in the local area."

Councillor Gaye Partridge, Dudley cabinet member for housing, said: "We're delighted that work will be starting in the new year on the construction of 39 new affordable homes as part of this development."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bin day changes during festivities

PEOPLE in Dudley are being reminded that there are changes to waste and recycling collections over the festive period.

Households will have altered collection times until January 2, 2016, and flyers detailing the changes have been delivered to all borough homes. Details are also available on the council's website and by contacting Dudley Council Plus. Residents are advised that collections may be earlier than usual during the Christmas period. Collection calendars are available at www.dudley.gov.uk/recycling

Envelope worry led to closure of bank

POLICE were called to a Stourbridge bank after concerns were raised about a 'suspicious envelope'.

Officers were called to Nationwide in High Street at around 11.40am on Tuesday and the branch was closed.

As well as blocking access, officers were also seen interviewing members of the public inside.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "It was found that the item didn't pose a threat and has since been removed from the scene for further analysis. We are still investigating the incident."

Hospice service gets £1,000 boost

MARY Stevens Hospice is celebrating after receiving £1,000 from Vodafone UK. They collected the Vodafone Community Connection Award last week after staff in the Stourbridge store chose the hospice to benefit.

Charlotte Schofield, who entered the charity for the award, said: "We will use this money to fund the refurbishment of our Day Services Unit. We are currently trying to raise money so we are able to support 25 patients each day rather than 17."

Police in crackdown on drink and drug drivers

A TOTAL of 39 motorists will appear in court after the first week of the festive season drink-driving crackdown by West Midlands Police.

There has also been a surge in the numbers arrested for driving under the influence of drugs. In the first seven days of this month's campaign, 39 motorists were charged for drink-driving. The highest breath test was 108 — three times the limit. The Central Motorway Police Group also made 13 arrests for positive drug tests.

Extra parking bays

A MULTI-STOREY car park at Merry Hill has received a major revamp to allow it to fully reopen in time for the Christmas rush. The middle deck of the 'purple' car park at the Brierley Hill shopping centre closed four years ago. It now brings back 350 spaces, taking it to 1,000 bays on three levels.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Tesco is washing its hands of bag snags

A COUPLE of weeks ago I got on a train from Wolverhampton to Birmingham. It was filthy, passengers were packed like sardines into the drab, cramped carriages. Somebody had drawn a phallic symbol in the thick coating of dirt on the windows.

And the operator responsible for this service? It was one of the many services run by Deutschebahn, the German state-owned rail operator. They run quite a lot of trains around the West Midlands these days. Some of them very badly.

Bear that in mind next time somebody tells you that nationalisation is the solution for all the ills on our railways.

■■■

ACCORDING to a recent report, encouraging people to wash their hands for 30 seconds at a time could prevent up to 25,000 deaths a year.

Aparently the average Joe's hands are a haven for filth, bacteria and faeces.

The study, which has prompted Government and medical bosses to launch a national hand washing campaign, reports that three in 10 commuters have poo on their hands as they go about their daily, ahem, business. Now remind me. Why did I never join the Freemasons?

■■■

GREAT news for supporters of the carrier bag charges. According to Tesco, use of plastic carriers has dropped by 78 per cent since the new rules came in.

The company says it has exceeded all expectations, with many people asking for a "bag-free delivery" when they order their shopping online. There have also been one or two mumblings about "changing people's attitudes". Of course there have. The great and the good are never happier than when they are changing people's attitudes.

And you know what? That's exactly what I was thinking when I was stumbling around town with my arms full of shopping, stooping every few yards to pick up the pork scratchings, sweets, bath products and tulip bulbs that I was carrying back to the car.

Still, on balance, I still think this is marginally preferable to the alternative, which seems to be walking around with your pockets stuffed with 'bags for life' and looking like Roy Cropper.

One thing did strike me though: doesn't it make life much easier for shoplifters now people are wandering into stores carrying goods they have bought elsewhere? And more to the point, doesn't it make life incredibly hard for shop assistants who, on top of their normal duties, now have to decide whether the customer's arms were really that full of shopping when they came through the door?

Did anybody give any consideration to that problem when deciding whether to introduce the new law? Thought not. Still, as long as it changes people's attitudes, that's the main thing.

Commission chairman, Baroness Butler-Sloss in her office

Rev Neil Robbie at Holy Trinity Church, in West Bromwich

Rev Canon Andrew Wickens, of St James The Great, Eve Hill

Are we now facing a crisis in Christianity?

Leading Christians in the region have been standing firm in the wake of a landmark report. Report by **LISA WRIGHT**

"TO say this is no longer a Christian country is taking it a bit far, but I would say it is fair to say it is a very inclusive country."

These are the words of the Reverend Prebendary David Wright from St Peter's Church in Wolverhampton, in the wake of a landmark report on religion – which found Britain was no longer just a Christian country.

The report published by the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life said there had been a 'general decline' in Christian affiliation – with two in five people now identifying as such – coupled with a move away from mainstream denominations to evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism have also overtaken Judaism as the largest non-Christian faiths in Britain.

Among the 'striking' trends, the report said, was a rise in the number of people who identified as non-religious – now amounting to almost half the UK population.

But Baroness Butler-Sloss, who chaired the commission, said issues such as the Paris terrorist attacks and the banning of a Church of England advert in cinemas showed religious beliefs are still central to society.

However, now church leaders from across the region maintained that Christianity was still an important faith in this country.

"Britain is a country where there remains a significant Christian presence," added Rev Preb Wright.

"A significant Christian influence and where significant numbers of people are still practising Christians or would trace their affiliations, although may not be active, but it is also a country that embraces other faiths.

"We are a multi-faith society built on firmly Christian faiths."

Rev David Wright, at St Peter's Church, who has commented on a landmark report on religion

Rev Rob Farmer, of St Mark's in Shelfield

While Neil Robbie, the vicar at the Holy Trinity Church in West Bromwich, said: "Our public institutions, government structures, education system, health care system and justice system. These have all been built over a millennia by Christian thinkers.

"It's not as simple to say we are no longer a Christian nation because people don't believe. For us not to be a Christian nation there would have to be a dissolution of these systems and institutions.

"Secular thinkings are squatting in the house that Christians built and what they are saying is look at the house we built, when actually what they are doing is demolishing it.

"We don't want to give credit to people who have shaped our society."

Janet Bailey, chief organiser at St Luke's Church in Cannock, who celebrated their 900th anniversary this year, said: "We recognise here at St Lukes that a lot of people don't have a faith, but we still have a very strong congregation and do not feel that is going to change any time soon.

"I don't agree or disagree with what has been said but we live in a multi-cultural society and this is something we have to accept, and really should applaud."

And Rev Rob Farmer, of St Mark's Parish in Shelfield, said: "I can understand why people do say we are no longer a Christian country but I believe everybody has some kind of spirituality in them.

"We have a very healthy congregation and upon engaging with people who come to St Mark's, we are told they thoroughly enjoy the experience here and that is all we can ask."

The report also said the number of Church of England bishops who sit as peers in the House of Lords should be cut to make way for leaders of other faiths. Rev Canon Andrew Wickens, of St James The Great, Eve Hill, who is chairman of Dudley Interfaith Network, said he believed the report 'merits study'.

He also said the recommendation to reduce the number of Bishops in the House of Lords needed to be considered as the country becomes more diverse.

"I welcome anything that contributes to debates about the place of religion in our common life so I am sure that this is a report that merits study by people. The Church of England has sought to serve the whole of the local community – we offer support to all.

"We have bishops in the House of Lords. It's only right and proper that the whole of our society is represented. At a national level it makes sense that the people who represent us are taken from broad section of society," he added.

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Rowers stick to dry land to back ocean challenge

Dudley Rowing Club members Stephen Knight and Tina Boothroyd are pictured taking part in a charity 'rowathon' at Netherton

AS their friends attempt to row the Atlantic Ocean, members of a club in Dudley are matching them mile-for-mile on dry land.

Dudley Rowing Club member and biology teacher Lee Felton, aged 30, and software engineer Sean Lannon, 31, were this due to embark on what is known as the 'The World's Toughest Race', crossing 3,000 miles of the Atlantic Ocean from La Gomera, in the Canary Islands, to Antigua in the Caribbean. They are raising awareness for charities Rape Crisis England & Wales and Sport for Freedom.

After keeping their Square One Atlantic boat in storage at Dudley Rowing Club's headquarters at Lodge Farm Reservoir, Netherton, club chairman Tina Boothroyd became inspired by the boys idea and decided to create an indoor rowing event to raise money for the same causes.

Tina, 55, from Dudley, said: "Because the boys are doing such a monumental challenge, I just thought, why can't we do something like that on land. The aim is to row 4,828,032 metres, the equivalent of the 3,000 miles Lee and Sean are doing.

"We want to raise at least £1,000 for these causes. If we got to £2,000 I'd be overjoyed, anything above that I would be absolutely jubilant.

"We've had great support from rowing clubs across Bewdley, Stourbridge and Worcester, staff at Dudley council and Action Heart, just to name a few groups who have backed us. "

Over the past 12 months both Lee and Sean, have been collecting donations and sponsorship. The pair will row in two-hour shifts 24 hours a day to cross the ocean raising over £100,00 for the two charities.

The race comes at the end of the hurricane season, with both men hoping to gain a benefit from the easterly trade winds and Atlantic currents.

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Thousands of families face losing their home

MORE than 35,000 cries for help from people in the West Midlands who are on the brink of homelessness have been made to a helpline.

The shock figures show that the number of requests from those in dire need has almost trebled in the last five years.

In the last year, almost 8,000 households in the region were made officially homeless.

The figures, drawn from official statistics, come as no surprise to housing and homelessness charity Shelter, whose advisers have been inundated with calls for help.

In the last year the number of calls to Shelter's free helpline from the West Midlands reached over 35,000. Shelter said one in five of the calls they were able to answer came from people who faced losing their home within a month.

The charity is calling on the public to show support, as its advisers brace themselves for even more calls this Christmas.

Campbell Robb, Shelter's chief executive said: "It's truly devastating to hear that so many people – including families with children – are teetering on the brink of homelessness. It's heart-breaking to imagine one child waking up homeless and in unstable temporary accommodation on Christmas morning, yet we know over 100,000 children across the country are facing exactly that fate.

By Nick Humphreys

Welfare

"The combination of our affordable housing shortage and cuts to welfare means more parents are struggling."

"That's why we desperately need the public's support this Christmas, to help us be there so that no family has to fight homelessness on their own."

To support Shelter's emergency Christmas appeal visit www.shelter.org.uk or text SHELTER to 70060 to donate £3.

100-year-old vicar returns to church

Rev Andrew Collins celebrated mass at St Edmund's Church in Dudley just six days after his 100th birthday

BRITAIN was a year into the First World War when Rev Andrew Collins was born and he went on to serve as an officer in the RAF during the Second World War, before devoting his life to the church and education.

The vicar, who taught at schools in the Black Country, has just turned 100 but shows no signs of slowing down. He led mass at St Edmund's Church in Dudley, six days after his landmark birthday. Without the use of a microphone he consecrated the bread and wine, joked with parishioners and vowed to come back next year after his 101st birthday. Speaking of his return to the church, he said the role 'isn't really something you ever retire from'

Jon Harcourt, a friend and treasurer at St Edmund's, said: "He always comes to celebrate mass as near to his birthday as possible. He must've been the oldest vicar celebrating mass that day. He has been coming to St Edmunds for 70 years. He was also the priest-in-charge at St Mary the Virgin Church in Enville, where he now lives.

"A reception was also held in Enville Hall to celebrate his 100th birthday."

Mr Collins was deputy headteacher of Lower Gornal Boys' Secondary School and later headteacher at the Church of the Ascension Middle School, Wall Heath.

He was ordained in 1961 and became senior curate of Sedgley Parish Church. The father-of-four, who was married to his late wife Marian for 57 years, was appointed priest-in-charge of Enville in 1997. He now lives there with his daughter.

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Fire-hit car firm has risen from the ashes

A SPORTS car repair firm hit by a blaze which destroyed its workshop and 10 luxury cars is up and running again from a new base.

The previous premises of The Central Sports Cars base at the Dadsford Bridge Industrial Estate in Plant Street, Wordsley, is set to be demolished following the devastating fire.

But bosses say they are relieved they have been able to bounce back and carry on with their business new premises in Ham Lane, Kingswinford.

Ten cars worth thousands of pounds, including Porsches and TVRs, were destroyed in the huge fire in September. Only the charred shells of the cars remained with the rest of the workshop reduced to twisted metal.

At the time of the blaze staff were able to save eight other vehicles which were parked just outside the scene of the fire.

Central TVR owners Adrian and Vanessa Windridge with staff.. (17140780)

The charred remains of vehicles after the fire at Central Sports Cars

Ferocious

Company owner Adrian Windridge, who was based at the Wordsley unit for 10 years, said he was sad to see their former premises go but pleased that they were now successfully set up again nearby.

"There was no doubt that it was a horrendous and very ferocious blaze but our customers' cars were covered by the insurance," he said.

"It would have taken us too long to rebuild the premises if we had stayed there, so we made the decision to move. We were lucky that we still had equipment and that our customers were paid off.

"We have had to start out again from scratch and we lost a month of business but nobody was hurt in the blaze, that was the most important thing.

"Our Ham Lane premises are a lot bigger and we are doing well so far," he added.

The firm employ five full-time and two part-time staff.

Mr Windridge's wife Vanessa is a receptionist at the firm.

Around 30 firefighters were involved in tackling the fire, with eight fire engines and a hydraulic platform involved. Crews had to withdraw from the building for safety reasons after the fire spread to the roof.

Plant Street was closed off between Mill Street and High Street for hours.

A statement on the company website praises the fire brigade, adding: "We could have given up, said 'that's it – we quit', but TVR people just aren't like that."

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Delayed motorway link roadworks are finally completed

OVERRUNNING motorway roadworks, which caused a year of chaos on surrounding roads, have finally been completed – six months later than expected.

Repair work on the link road off the M6 at Wednesbury on to the M5 in West Bromwich finished last week.

It brings to an end 12 months of misery for motorists across the region, caused by sealed off lanes and the closure of the M6 Junction 9 slip road.

The southbound carriageway has returned to full-lane capacity and the slip road reopened.

But bosses have warned there could be up to six overnight closures in the new year on the same stretch in order to complete 'snagging works'.

Highways England project manager Jess Kenny said: "We would like to thank motorists for their patience throughout the year in what has been a long and challenging maintenance programme. It was vital that we did this work and we are pleased to finally have the roadworks removed. In the new year we will need to carry out final pieces of work which will be done overnight and will have minimal impact on motorists."

The work, which was carried out to replace damaged waterproofing along the stretch of motorway, was originally due to be finished in June. But it met a series of delays after it emerged that damage underneath the carriageway was far worse than anticipated.

The job was extended until November but another four-week delay followed after extensive steel corrosion and concrete damage was found.

Senior keeper Jodie Dryden with the giraffes who went on a family stroll together at Dudley Zoo

Fab four at zoo

DUDLEY Zoo's four giraffes have stepped out into their paddock together for the first time in almost two years.

Male Rothschild's giraffe Kubwa, mother Mia, their son Kito and female Josie have all just started sharing the paddock at the same time — and so far the reintroduction has gone very well, according to keeper Jay Haywood.

He said: "When Kito was born in February 2014, he did meet his father briefly but we kept Kubwa separate from the others so the youngster could bond with his mother and go on to develop in size and confidence.

"We now feel it is the right time for the four giraffes to be together and so far it has gone well.

Breakfast

"A few of our regulars have noticed all four of them are together and have said it was lovely to see."

Last week the giraffes were given a special breakfast in honour of Josie's seventh birthday.

Senior keeper Jodie Dryden said: "We give the giraffes bamboo as a treat, so it was a perfect birthday breakfast for her – although she had to eat it quickly before Kito and Kubwa tried to butt in and get their share too."

A couple from Shropshire, who adopted the zoo's raven Jill and who became Keepers for a Day earlier in the year, have also sent in a festive thank-you gift for one of the giraffe keepers.

Avril and Brian Chidley, of Shrewsbury, sent a Christmas card to the zoo staff but also included a giraffe T-shirt especially for a keeper to wear.

Meanwhile, the zoo's camel family have been stepping out in their enclosure together for the first time at the Castle Hill attraction.

The new female calf, named Fergie, was born on October 3 to mother Jimandi and father Charles.

The youngster, who already stands at around 4ft tall, has been getting plenty of attention from keepers and visitors since she made her arrival.

Senior keeper Lesley Lewis said the doting parents were doing a great job of looking after the little one, who likes to stay as close to her parents as she can.

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Police can't go to every crime scene, says chief

THE public cannot expect to see as many bobbies responding to so-called 'lesser crimes', Britain's second highest ranking police officer has said.

West Midlands Police Chief Constable Chris Sims, who retires from his post in January, said police forces had to be 'sensible' how they deployed their officers and could no longer 'resource every call'.

He also said more crime should be reported by victims online in future.

"It would be very hard to think we would maintain that level of visibility that we have got. That is because things like cyber crime and domestic abuse are not threats dealt with by officers patrolling in uniform.

Ambition

"There needs to be a rebalancing of how policing is delivered but I would be concerned if people were burgled and felt that we were not there to protect them.

"We have an ambition to have a better online presence than we do.

"If you are a victim of a lesser crime there is something to be said for reporting it online. I think if I was a victim of a less serious crime, there is a kind of convenience at sitting at home to file a report and get a follow up. It is giving people more of a choice."

He added: "We have to be sensible about how we use police resources given the litany of threats there are, but our primary job is to protect people.

By Rob Golledge

"Our service is really important to us but it has to sit next to an obligation to protect. There are not many public services now where you can pick the phone up and the service comes to you in an unconditional way. We have to accept we move over a period of time from being literally able to resource every call people make."

Mr Sims has presided over West Midlands Police since 2009 and overseen cuts of £130 million since 2010 and the loss of 3,000 police officers and staff.

He admitted that fewer officers meant the force was unable to do as much as it wanted but that delivering results had not been affected.

But he said the force would struggle if there were further high-scale cuts.

He said: "I think we were able to take a lot of the pain of job losses from the areas that were not impacting on the service and protection of the public. I am not sure we could have continued that for another five years."

Fire destroys cars

FOUR cars and a Portakabin were destroyed by a fire in Cradley Heath believed to have been caused by arsonists.

Crews from Brierley Hill and Haden Cross were called to the blaze in Lower High Street at around 1.20am on Thursday, December 17, and were at the scene for around an hour.

It is believed the fire spread from the building to the cars.

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Shemiah Browne with Nathan Byrne and Matt Doherty

Bright Enobakhare and Sheyi Ojo with Harvey Martin

Wolves players do the rounds in hospital visit

Jessica Flowers, aged four, Penn meets goalkeeper Jon Flatt

Nathan Byrne and Benik Afobe greet Mateo George and dad Syiah

HOSPITAL patients were treated to a surprise visit by Wolverhampton Wanderers players.

Members from the first team and the under 21 side visited patients at New Cross – including those on the Deanesley ward, children's unit and maternity – and handed out gifts.

The club arranges the visit each year to give patients going through a difficult time a chance to meet the players and to brighten up their day.

Defender Matt Doherty lauded the heroics of the staff at the hospital. He said: "I have got so much respect for the staff with all the things that they do, they are heroes really to these patients. The things they do though we take for granted almost."

Humble

Striker Benik Afobe said: "It is nice to come and see people in the hospital here and hopefully they can all get better. It is sad to see.

"We don't know a lot that goes on because all we do is train and work hard, and go home and see our friends and family.

"There is just so much going on in the world and it makes you humble to see and the looks on their faces when they see us you know.

"The work that the staff do sometimes goes unnoticed, with all the hours they put in and the late shifts."

The players that visited New Cross Hospital were Benik Afobe, Matt Doherty, Sheyi Ojo, Jordan Graham, Nathan Byrne, Bjorn Sigurdarson, Bright Enobakhare, Declan Weeks, Callum Harris, Jonathan Flatt and Sylvain Deslandes.

Fan Jack Spragg with Bjorn Sigurdarson and Jordan Graham

Wolves players with Stuart Craggs and baby Issac

Wolves players, Patricia Murray and Lilian Smith

Roy Gaskin of Wombourne cheered up by the players

Great show for a Chuckle or two

GRAND PANTO REVIEW

By Mark Shipp

HANDS up. Most people leaving the theatre will greet people with a big "Helloorr". I know I did.

Welcome to pantomime the Chuckle Brothers style.

I wouldn't say it was their finest work, that dubious honour goes to their collaboration with Tinchy Stryder. But there were laughs-aplenty, particularly when they couldn't keep a straight face themselves.

Taking the parts of the Brothers Smee, they were almost given their own mini-series during this reworking of Peter Pan. And each time their arrival was met to the tune of Chuckle, Chuckle Vision.

Paul and Barry Chuckle as the Brothers Smee in Peter Pan

Captain Hook, alias John Altman

Hannah Nicholls as Wendy

Frilly

Audience members can expect to get wet, and even 'pied' during the two-hour long show, but it's worth it just to hear Barry's attempts to say Smith's Crisps.

Mind you, I'm not sure I want to relive the image of him in just a pair of frilly pants.

The jokes come thick and fast, like "Where's my buccaneers?" "On the side of your head but don't use that language."

And local references such as: "We're in jeopardy."

"Where's that?"

"Near Bilston."

"No, we are in danger."

"Where's danger?"

"Near Willenhall."

Of course, it wouldn't be a panto without a touch of adult humour, but to re-tell all the jokes would be spoiling it for those who have not yet been.

For anyone that hasn't, it runs until January 24, so what are you waiting for? The lavish production is both musically and technically brilliant and is quality family entertainment – with more than a hint of slapstick.

There was contemporary music in the form of Jess Glynne's Rather Be and Taylor Swift's Bad Blood.

The latter was performed by John Altman, better known as EastEnders' bad boy Nick Cotton in his role as another villain, Captain Hook. Though playing up to the role, and with the odd reference to his soap character, he was quite inaudible during his singing routine. The same could not be said of Kimmy Edwards as Tiger Lily however, with her terrific voice.

Ross Carpenter is an endearing Pan, while ex-Coronation Street actress Lucy Evans sparkles as Tinkerbell.

Hannah Nicholls also shines as Wendy, while credit must go to the Darling brothers,and the rest of the ensemble that made up the Lost Boys and pirates.

It's a Dead cert

DVD

by Leon Burakowski

Fear The Walking Dead (18)

FANS of the hit TV series The Walking Dead were eager to view its spin-off show Fear The Walking Dead but many were left disappointed this summer when it made its debut on pay-to-view BT, rather than joining the roster on Sky via the Fox channel.

However, Season One of the AMC show is now available on DVD and Blu-ray, nicely timed to plug the mid-season break in Season Six of The Walking Dead. Last month that left fans with a cliffhanger as Rick Grimes and co pushed their way through a horde of zombies after taking the yukky but literally gutsy option of covering themselves in walker viscera to avoid being sniffed out.

FTWD takes fans of the tense horror-survivalist drama right back to the beginning of the zombie apocalypse. But whereas the original series had cop Rick (Brit actor Andrew Lincoln) wake up in an apparently deserted Georgia hospital with the normal world having already collapsed, the promise of the new series is that we get to see the monster plague unfold on the streets of Los Angeles.

Mayhem

But FTWD is very slow to get out of the blocks and doesn't unleash the sort of mayhem we have come to expect from its parent show until the last of its six episodes. This is partly because half the series in spent in a 'safe zone' cordoned-off by an increasingly Fascist-like US Army.

Instead we get to know a rather difficult-to-like Californian 'blended' family with a former drug addict mom turned school counsellor mollycoddling her junkie son (who is the first to encounter a zombie in the tense opening scene), his cynical sister and their new dad torn between them and his own son. These characters are all played by very capable actors. These include Kim Dickens (Deadwood, Treme) who finally realises the gravity of the situation when she has to batter her school principal, and young British actor Frank Dillane (Tom Riddle in Harry Potter) who spends a lot of time shuffling around LA like a pseudo-zombie in his cream-coloured Harrington jacket.

FTWD is about half as good as its addictive parent show, which has won a dedicated fan base, but that will probably be good enough to ensure its success, and another season is already in the pipeline.

Other new releases include the second series of BBC Four's **Detectorists (15)**, a sitcom written, directed and starring Mackenzie Crook (from The Office). The story of a pair of metal detector enthusiasts begins with our hapless heroes just inches from a buried hoard of ancient treasure but, of course, Andy (Crook) and Lance (Toby Jones) head in the wrong direction. Detectorists is as gentle as the rolling green countryside our amateur archaeologists spend their time bumbling around. The first series and a boxed set of the two is also available on DVD.

The zombie apocalypse hits LA in Fear The Walking Dead

One of the great concert movies, **Stop Making Sense**, has been restored for DVD and Blu-ray more than 30 years after its original release. It captures influential American band Talking Heads at the peak of their powers as director Jonathan Demme includes iconic images from frontman David Byrne's understated arrival performing Psycho Killer with a boom box, to surreal scenes dancing with a lampshade and appearing inside a giant suit.

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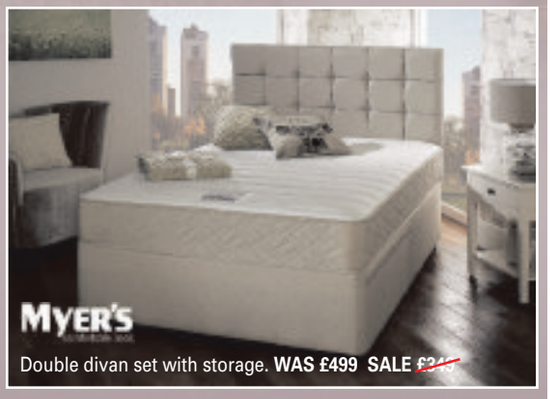

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Closing campus is a 'great opportunity' to save money

A COLLEGE planning to shut its technology and construction campus in Brierley Hill says it marks a 'great opportunity' to save money.

Birmingham Metropolitan College will close its Advanced Technology Centre (ATC) at The Waterfront at the end of its lease next September.

Some courses will go to Stourbridge College's campus in Hagley Road as part of a £1.8m revamp of the site.

But people wishing to study courses in plastering, bricklaying and painting and decorating will have to go to travel miles to its campus in Erdington.

Head of Stourbridge College, Wendy Stevens, said: "This decision is driven by our desire to improve provision, and represents a great opportunity for us to save money from the lease – £5m over the next 10 years – and reinvest this in the skills needs of the area, by developing a new construction provision at our college-owned facilities in the Black Country.

"This investment provides our students with an opportunity to study at great new facilities at our main campus, where they will benefit from a wider range of learning resources and support services, including careers advice and guidance with university and job applications.

"The investment also demonstrates the college's desire to meet local skills needs and to continuously improve teaching for all students.

"We are very clear that we want to retain all members of staff and we are currently in consultation about the changes."

The cost-cutting move comes after the Further Education Commissioner was brought in due to the college's request for 'exceptional financial support' from the Skills Funding Agency.

Curator is lemur matchmaker

DUDLEY Zoo's curator has taken on a key role in the international conservation battle to save black lemurs from extinction.

Richard Brown has taken over the European management of the endangered species from zoo director Derek Grove.

Mr Grove will continue collating the European Endangered Species Programme studbook with registrar and research co-ordinator Dr Dave Beeston.

Dr Beeston amasses details of all births, deaths and transfers within collections and plans for new breeding programmes. As co-ordinator for the programme, Mr Brown will use the studbook to make recommendations about which black lemurs are suitable for breeding.

Mr Brown added: "It's like Blind Date for black lemurs really."

Union worried at council cuts

SEVERE cuts resulting in up to 1,200 job losses at Birmingham City Council 'come at the expense of ordinary workers' according to union chiefs.

The city council has revealed plans to make a further £250 million of cuts in the next four years to balance the books.

The cash-strapped authority says that the axe will fall on job roles with care assistants and therapists among those facing redundancy. The jobs will go during the next financial year, 2016/17.

Officials from the GMB union claim there will also be changes to council services and reductions in the terms and conditions of employment.

GMB organiser, Gill Whittaker, said: "Through job losses, pay freezes and changes to other terms and conditions workers have borne the brunt of the Government's cuts to local authority funding.

"Despite this GMB has so far continued to try and work constructively with the council and members have continued to try and provide decent public services. However, this can't carry on. The majority of savings generated from the council's proposals come at the expense of ordinary council workers."

"GMB members deliver the essential council services for Birmingham residents and they deserve better than this."

City council leader John Clancy said that the authority would have to 'completely remodel and reimagine' the way it does things due to the spending cuts.

Diamond couple celebrate

Gladys and Donald Vine, both aged 81, of Upper Gornal, celebrate 60 years of marriage

A COUPLE are celebrating 60 diamond years together after getting married on a whim with only cleaners for witnesses.

Gladys and Donald Vine, both 81, from Upper Gornal, met as teenagers and instantly became friends.

Gladys, from Sedgley, and Donald, from the Priory Estate in Dudley, decided to get married on a whim on December 3, 1955.

"They went to a Sedgley registry office and only had the cleaners as their witnesses – yet look how long they have lasted together, 60 years is amazing," said their daughter Tina. "They have been the best parents anyone could ever wish for."

Mr and Mrs Vine have four children – Tina, Paul, Colette and Martin; six grandchildren Gemma, Dale, Joanna, Thomas, Damien and Jodie; and three great-grand children Aaliyah, Nave and Zak.

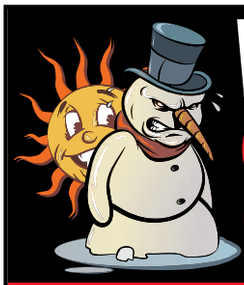
New owners are taking over after the sale of £1m football complex

A FIVE-A-SIDE football centre in Rowley Regis has new owners after being bought for around £1 million.

Goals Soccer Centre, in Cakemore Road, was sold at auction. The venue carried a guide price of £1 million and sold for 'in and around' that amount.

The identity of the owners has not yet been revealed but the future of football at the site has already been assured with a 55-year-lease to host football. Goals Soccer Centre has an established reputation among amateur footballers in the Black Country for its floodlit all-weather outdoor pitches accredited by the Football Association.

The company, which has another site in Willenhall, warned over profits in September after a washout summer. Goals' futuristic complex created 25 jobs when built in 2008.



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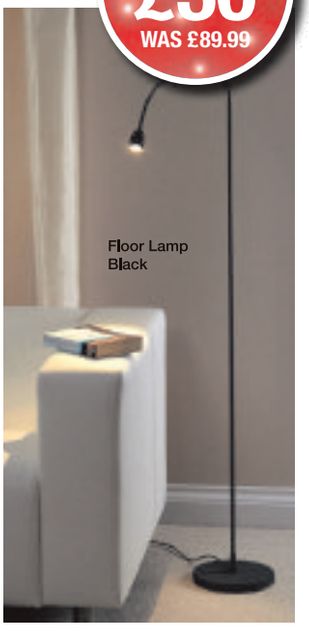
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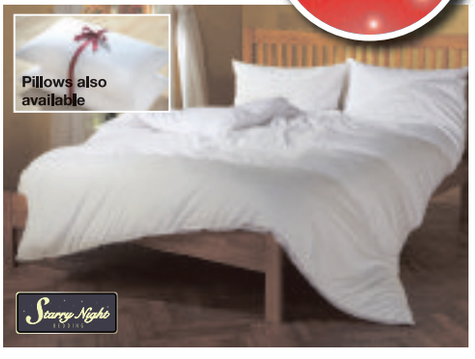
Pillows also available

Product	13.5 tog	Was	Price	15 tog	Was	Price	18 tog	Was	Price
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Double	D6095	£49.99	£33.99	D6099	£54.99	£36.99	D7979	£69.99	£39.99
King	D6096	£64.99	£36.99	D6100	£69.99	£39.99	D7980	£79.99	£42.99
Super King	D6097	£74.99	£39.99	D6101	£79.99	£42.99	D7981	£89.99	£44.99
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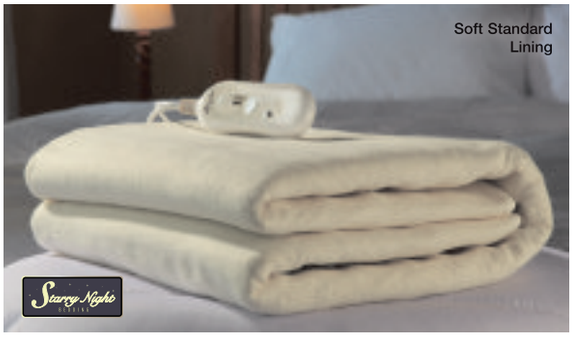
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Christmas Eve

Early View

BBC 1

Lee Mack features in the Christmas special of Not Going Out, on at 10.45pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00 David Suchet: In the Footsteps of St Paul** Part two of two. How Paul brought Christianity to the Mediterranean world. (R) **10.00 On Angel Wings** (R) **10.30 FILM: The Santa Clause (1994)** Fantasy comedy, starring Tim Allen. ★★★ **12.00 Bargain Hunt** Four teams test their antiques knowledge in Corby, Northamptonshire. (R) **1.00 BBC News at One; Weather 1.10 Midlands Today; Weather 1.20 Snow Chick: A Penguin's Tale** Following the first months in the life of an emperor penguin. (R) **2.20 FILM: A Christmas Carol (2009)** Animated fantasy based on Charles Dickens' novel, featuring Jim Carrey and Gary Oldman. ★★

BBC 2

Natalie Dormer stars in The Scandalous Lady W, on at 10.00pm

6.20 Homes Under the Hammer A cottage in Cornwall and a house in south London. (R) **7.20 James Martin – Home Comforts at Christmas** (R) **8.05 Sign Zone: This Wild Life** (R) **8.35 Sign Zone: Great British Menu** (R) **9.05 FILM: Bedknobs and Broomsticks (1971)** Disney musical fantasy, starring Angela Lansbury. ★★★ **11.00 The Hairy Bikers' Northern Exposure** (R) **12.00 Natural World** Gentoo penguins raising chicks in Port Lockroy in the Antarctic. (R) **1.00 FILM: Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit (1993)** Comedy sequel, starring Whoopi Goldberg. ★★★ **2.45 Perry and Croft: Made in Britain** How the duo's comedies each encapsulated the end of an era. (R)

ITV

Keith Lemon presents Through the Christmas Keyhole, on at 9.45pm

6.00 CITV: Dino Dan. (R) **6.15 Dino Dan** (R) **6.25 Sooty** (R) **6.40 Super 4** Fourchesac tries to make a love potion for the Dark Baron. (R) **7.00 Good Morning Britain** News, current affairs and lifestyle features. **8.30 Lorraine** Entertainment and fashion news. **9.25 Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas** Stop-motion animated adventure based on the film Elf. (R) **10.25 Pick Me!** Game show featuring lively, loud and energetic players. (R) **11.25 FILM: Back to the Future Part II (1989)** Sci-fi comedy sequel, starring Michael J Fox. ★★★ **1.30 ITV Lunchtime News;** Weather. **1.45 FILM: Small Soldiers (1998)** Children's adventure, with Kirsten Dunst, Denis Leary and Gregory Smith. ★★★

Ch4

Christmas displays, My Crazy Christmas Lights, on at 8.00pm

6.15 Small Animal Hospital John Barrowman visits a centre for rescued rabbits. **7.00 The Big Bang Theory** (R) **7.20 The Big Bang Theory** (R) **7.40 The Snowman** (R) **8.05 Father Christmas** (R) **8.35 The Simpsons** (R) **9.10 FILM: Animals United (2010)** Animated comedy with the voices of James Corden and Stephen Fry. ★★ **10.55 FILM: Horton Hears a Who! (2008)** Animated comedy, featuring the voice of Jim Carrey. ★★★ **12.30 FILM: Stuart Little (1999)** Comedy adventure, with the voice of Michael J Fox. ★★★ **2.10 Channel 4 News** Including sport and weather. **2.15 FILM: It's a Wonderful Life (1946)** Fantasy drama, starring James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore. (b/w) ★★★★

Ch5

Festive cheer in Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud, on at 7.00pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.30 The Real Face of Santa Claus Documentary piecing together historical clues about St Nicholas, an early Christian bishop who lived in Turkey, while forensic experts build a reconstruction of his likeness. **10.30 FILM: Gone with the Wind (1939)** A plantation heiress has a tumultuous relationship with a roguish Southern gentleman during the American Civil War. Epic romantic drama, starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable. ★★★★ **2.45 FILM: The Dam Busters (1954)** An engineer designs an ingenious bouncing bomb to destroy major dams in Germany's industrial heartland. Fact-based Second World War drama, with Michael Redgrave. (b/w) ★★★★

Prime Time

3.50 Finding Nemo (2003) ★★★★
5.20 Harry Hill in Professor Branestawm Returns
6.20 BBC News
6.30 Midlands Today; Weather
6.40 Celebrity Mastermind
7.10 Pointless Celebrities Christmas Special Featuring Jeffrey Holland and Su Pollard, Alison Hammond and Robin Windsor, and Colin Baker and Louise Jameson.
8.00 Would I Lie to You? At Christmas Rob Brydon presents a festive special of the comedy game, with Bill Bailey, Ruth Jones, Jo Brand and Kelly Holmes joining team captains David Mitchell and Lee Mack.
8.30 EastEnders Stacey goes into labour during the nativity play, Ronnie is forced to choose a side between Vincent and Phil, and Sharon drops a bombshell that threatens to tear the Beales apart.
9.05 Peter Kay: 20 Years of Funny A celebration of the Bolton comedian's two decades in the business, going back to his early days before stardom and hearing from friends and colleagues about what makes him tick.
10.05 Walliams and Friend Sketch show, starring David Walliams and Joanna Lumley.
10.45 Not Going Out On Christmas Eve, Lee and Lucy – who is three days overdue with their first baby – find themselves mistakenly caught up in a robbery at a local department store.
11.30 BBC News; Weather.
11.45 Midnight Mass from St George's Cathedral, Southwark Live service from south London, led by the Archbishop of Southwark, the Most Rev Peter Smith, with prayers to reflect the cathedral's international congregation.
1.00 FILM: Serendipity (2001) ★★★ **2.25 Weather for the Week Ahead 2.30 BBC News**

3.15 The Snow Wolf Family and Me (R)
4.15 The Snow Wolf Family and Me (R)
5.15 Carols from King's
6.30 To the Manor Born (R)
7.00 Dad's Army Mainwaring finds himself bidding against Pike for an orange at a fundraising bazaar, but the private reveals a stubborn streak that costs the captain dear. (R)
7.30 Christmas University Challenge Graduates from Exeter University and Magdalen College, Oxford, compete, with wildlife presenter Nick Baker and documentary-maker Louis Theroux among the contestants.
8.00 MasterChef: The Professionals The three finalists have three hours to cook a starter, a main course and a dessert, before one of them is crowned Professional MasterChef Champion 2015. Last in the series.
9.00 The Great History Quiz: The Tudors Kirsty Young asks the questions in this quiz which sees two teams of historians, captained by Lucy Worsley and Dan Snow, demonstrate their knowledge on all aspects of Tudor life.
10.00 The Scandalous Lady W Fact-based period drama about an 18th-century noblewoman who found herself at the centre of a public scandal after eloping with her husband's best friend. Natalie Dormer stars. (R)
11.30 Dial M for Murder (1954) A tennis player's plan to arrange the death of his socialite wife goes wrong when she kills her would-be assassin. Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, with Ray Milland and Grace Kelly. ★★★
1.10 Simply Nigella: Christmas Special (R) **2.10 Christmas Shopping Fever 2015: John Lewis and the Retail Race** (R) **3.10 James Martin – Home Comforts at Christmas** (R)

3.50 National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989) Comedy, starring Chevy Chase. ★★★
5.40 All Star Mr & Mrs With Martine McCutcheon, Harry Redknapp and Gwyneth Strong. (R)
6.45 ITV Evening News; Weather.
7.00 Emmerdale Belle sees Zak and Joanie kissing and becomes determined to make her pay, while the warehouse robbery is on the news and Aaron's picture is in the paper.
8.00 Coronation Street Fiz tells Tyrone that Hope might not be allowed home for Christmas and Lapland might have to wait. Meanwhile, Tracy confides in Todd that she thinks Robert is planning to propose.
8.30 The Abba Christmas Party Paddy McGuinness presents as music and TV stars sing Abba hits, featuring performances by Susan Boyle, Alexandra Burke, Shayne Ward and Catherine Tyldesley and Scouting for Girls.
9.45 Through the Christmas Keyhole Keith Lemon has a festive rummage through the homes of three celebrities, challenging Stephen Mulhern, Claudia Winkleman and Jimmy Carr to guess their identities. Last in the series.
10.45 ITV News Including Regional News and ITV Weather; Weather.
11.00 Christmas Carols on ITV Aled Jones joins the congregation of St Elisabeth's Church in Reddish, Stockport, for their Christmas Eve carol service, with performances by Collabro and soul singer Toni Green.
12.00 FILM: Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure (1989) Time-travel comedy, starring Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter. ★★★ **1.40 Murder, She Wrote** (R) **2.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA** (R) **3.15 ITV Nightscreen** Text-based information service. **5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show** (R)

4.55 The Snowman Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R)
5.25 The Snowman and the Snowdog Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman. (R)
6.00 Hollyoaks When Lockie hears about the explosion, he is suspicious of Cameron and threatens to go to the police. Elsewhere, the police search for Reenie and Lisa reveals her secret.
7.00 Jamie's Night Before Christmas Jamie Oliver presents last-minute tips to help people improve their festive dishes, having surveyed thousands of Brits to find out what they fear most about cooking at Christmas.
8.00 My Crazy Christmas Lights The phenomenon of competitive Christmas displays, where a passion for festive lights has seen neighbours trying to outdo each other for the most elaborate design.
9.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Christmas Special Jimmy Carr hosts another festive edition of the show, with some of the nation's top comedy stars joining team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson.
10.00 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker Alex Zane presents 50 festive internet clips that have proved popular around the world, including a turkey with a boob job and an inventive Christmas tree decoration-remover.
11.00 Gogglebox Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)
12.00 The Inbetweeners (R) **12.35 The Inbetweeners** (R) **1.05 The Inbetweeners** (R) **1.30 The Inbetweeners** (R) **2.00 Man Down Christmas Special** (R) **2.30 Man Down** (R) **2.55 Man Down** (R) **3.25 Embarrassing Bodies** (R) **4.20 Benchmark 5.10 Kirstie's Handmade Treasures** (R) **5.30 Famous Fred** (R)

5.15 5 News
5.20 Scrooge – A Christmas Carol (1951) (b/w) Starring Alastair Sim. ★★★★
7.00 Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud Iain Lee presents Christmas-themed videos that have taken the internet by storm in a seasonal special showcasing hilarious online clips with a festive twist; 5 News Update
7.55 Frank Sinatra & Gene Kelly: Ol' Blues Eyes Is Back A TV special from 1973 in which Frank Sinatra performs a selection of classic songs and is joined for a couple of numbers by Anchors Aweigh co-star Gene Kelly.
8.25 Happy Holidays with Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby The veteran crooners' festive special from 1957, with songs including Away in a Manger, The Christmas Song, Santa Claus Is Coming to Town and White Christmas; 5 News Update
8.55 The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show Festive special from 1981, in which the duo perform vintage sketches and act as a backing group for Alvin Stardust. Featuring guest appearances by Ralph Richardson and Robert Hardy. (R)
10.00 Christmas with the Double Acts An hour of side-splitting fun with some of the greatest double acts to have graced the small screen, proving that when it comes to comedy, two are often better than one.
11.00 Morecambe & Wise Live! 1973 The duo's performance at the Ashcroft Theatre in Croydon's Fairfield Halls in October 1973, which was the only one of their stage shows captured on film. (R)
12.30 FILM: Scrooge – A Christmas Carol (1951) (b/w) ★★★★ **2.15 SuperCasino 4.00 Michaela's Wild Challenge** (R) **4.25 Divine Designs** (R) **4.45 House Doctor** (R) **5.10 House Doctor** (R) **5.35 House Doctor** (R)

Late View

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Christmas Day

BBC 1

Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special 2015, on at 6.15pm

Early View

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00 Shrek the Halls** (R) **9.20 Clangers 9.35 Danger Mouse: The Snowman Cometh 10.00 Christmas Day Service Live from Bath Abbey** A service led by the Rev Edward Mason and the Rev Claire Robson. **11.00 FILM: The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause (2006)** Christmas fantasy comedy sequel, starring Tim Allen. ★★★ **12.25 FILM: Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted (2012)** Animated comedy, with the voices of Ben Stiller and Chris Rock. ★★★ **1.50 BBC News;** Weather. **2.00 Top of the Pops Christmas** Featuring performances by Little Mix, Coldplay, Jess Glynne and Ellie Goulding.

Prime Time

3.00 The Queen's Christmas Broadcast 2015

3.10 Brave (2012) Premiere. Animated fantasy, with the voice of Kelly Macdonald. ★★★

4.35 BBC News; Weather.

4.45 Stick Man

5.15 Doctor Who

6.15 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special 2015 Six previous contestants compete for the Silver Star trophy.

7.30 Call the Midwife As Poplar readies itself for Christmas 1960, a visit from a BBC film crew promises to make it a festive holiday to remember. However, it's a difficult time for grieving mother Iris.

8.45 EastEnders Ian's hopes of a perfect Christmas fall apart when the Beales and Mitchells end up arguing, Stacey receives an unexpected visitor and Dean surprises Roxy with an engagement ring.

9.45 Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special The doting mother's wish to have a safe and peaceful Christmas at home is frustrated at every turn. The first of two festive instalments, written by and starring Brendan O'Carroll.

10.25 Michael McIntyre's Big Christmas Show From the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London, the host welcomes performers including Dara O Briain, Dame Edna Everage, Paul Zerdin, Ellie Goulding and Tom Jones to the stage.

11.25 BBC News; Weather.

11.40 Love Came Down at Christmas At St Alban's Church in Bristol, the Exultate Singers perform David Ogden's new choral setting of the Christina Rossetti poem, and actor Alex Jennings reads from the Gospel of John; National Lottery Update

Late View

11.45 Comedy Bloopers 12.15 **Not Going Out** (R) **1.00 FILM: Surviving Christmas (2004)** ★ **2.25 Weather for the Week Ahead 2.30 BBC News**

BBC 2

Taking a personal journey, Darcey's Ballet Heroes, on at 8.50pm

6.00 FILM: The Road to El Dorado (2000) Animated adventure, with the voices of Kenneth Branagh and Kevin Kline. ★★★ **7.20 Galapagos – Islands of Change: Natural World** (R) **8.20 FILM: Herbie Rides Again (1974)** Disney comedy sequel, starring Helen Hayes. ★★★ **9.45 FILM: The Cat in the Hat (2003)** Comedy fantasy, starring Mike Myers. ★★ **11.00 Carols from King's** (R) **12.15 Climbed Every Mountain – The Story Behind The Sound of Music** The true story behind the real Von Trapp family, with Sue Perkins. (R) **1.15 The Good Life** Tom ponders the future. (R) **1.45 FILM: Frankenweenie (2012)** Premiere. Animated fantasy, with the voice of Charlie Tahan. (b/w) ★★★

3.05 Tim Rice – A Life in Song (R)

4.35 Romeo & Juliet (2013) With Douglas Booth. ★★

6.20 Sign Zone: The Queen's Christmas Broadcast 2015 (R)

6.30 World's Sneakiest Animals

7.30 Dad's Army Pompous Captain Mainwaring proves he is a softie at heart by organising a Christmas treat for the struggling senior citizens of Walmington-on-Sea. (R)

8.00 The Two Ronnies: Christmas Show Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett in a special Christmas show of sketches, jokes and songs, with guests Peter Wyngarde and Patrick Troughton. Plus, music by Elaine Page. (R)

8.50 Darcey's Ballet Heroes Former ballet dancer-turned-Strictly Come Dancing judge Darcey Bussell undertakes a very personal journey to meet the heroes and dancers who transformed male ballet.

9.50 QI Stephen Fry conjures up some seasonal merriment with Jenny Eclair, Johnny Vegas and Bill Bailey supplementing the efforts of regular panellist Alan Davies.

10.20 We're Doomed!: The Dad's Army Story Comedy drama about how Jimmy Perry and David Croft overcame BBC management scepticism and focus groups to get the sitcom Dad's Army on air. Starring Paul Ritter and Richard Dormer. (R)

11.20 Gambit (2012) A put-upon art expert plans revenge on a millionaire by tricking him into buying a fake Monet painting. Comedy remake, starring Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz and Alan Rickman. ★★

12.40 **FILM: The Trouble with Harry (1955)** Hitchcock's black comedy, with Edmund Gwenn, John Forsyth and Shirley MacLaine. ★★★★ **2.20 This Is BBC Two**

ITV

Peter Wilkinson features, Cameraman to the Queen, on at 3.10pm

6.00 CITV: Dino Dan. (R) **6.10 Dino Dan** (R) **6.25 Sooty** (R) **6.40 Sooty** (R) **6.50 Oddbods** (R) **7.00 Dino Dan** (R) **7.15 Horrid Henry** (R) **7.30 Horrid Henry** (R) **7.45 Christmas: Chowder** Chowder worries he will not get the gift that he wants. (R) **8.10 Almost Naked Animals** (R) **8.25 Weekend at Christmas** With Laura Fraser, James Morrison and Leona Lewis. **9.25 FILM: Santa Claus: The Movie (1985)** Family fantasy adventure, starring Dudley Moore. ★★ **11.30 FILM: Happy Feet (2006)** Animated adventure, with the voices of Elijah Wood and Robin Williams. ★★★ **1.35 Text Santa: One More Time** Choice moments from the recent TV charity appeal. **2.45 ITV Lunchtime News;** Weather.

3.00 The Queen Her Majesty's annual address.

3.10 Cameraman to the Queen Royal cameraman Peter Wilkinson follows the queen over the course of one year.

4.10 Countrywise Winter Wonderland Exploring what makes this time of year special for Britain's countryside.

5.00 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas The broadcaster spreads festive cheer at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home in London.

6.00 ITV Evening News; Weather.

6.15 You've Been Framed! With Bells On Camcorder clips with a festive theme, including a pensioner throwing fireworks at carol singers, a Christmas fairy going up in flames, and a smartphone found inside a turkey.

6.45 Emmerdale Pollard finally leaves the house, and has an experience that forces him to confront his past, present and future. Coronation Street's Liz Dawn (Vera Duckworth) guest stars.

7.45 Coronation Street Robert is about to propose to Tracy, but first he asks her a question that leaves her reeling. Meanwhile, Sinead is thrilled when she gets an engagement ring of her own.

8.45 Downton Abbey – The Finale Mary endeavours to build bridges, but Edith's secret continues to pose a threat as Julian Fellowes bids farewell to the Crawleys with one last festive special.

10.45 Our Cilla A celebration of Cilla Black by the people who knew her best, including famous faces such as Ringo Starr, Cliff Richard, Christopher Biggins and Paul O'Grady.

11.45 ITV News; Weather.

12.00 FILM: Dr No (1962) ★★★★ **1.50 Murder, She Wrote** (R) **2.45 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA** (R) **3.25 ITV Nightscreen**

CH4

Children share their views, Gogglesprogs, on at 8.00pm

6.45 Prep & Landing (R) **7.05 Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice** (R) **7.30 The Bear** (R) **8.00 FILM: A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures (2010)** ★★★ **9.40 The Simpsons** (R) **10.10 The Simpsons** (R) **10.40 The Simpsons** (R) **11.15 Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas** (R) **11.40 Toy Story Toons 12.10 Father Christmas** Seasonal animation based on Raymond Briggs' book. (R) **12.40 The Snowman** Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R) **1.15 The Snowman and the Snowdog** Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman. (R) **1.45 FILM: The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992)** Comedy, with Michael Caine and Steven Mackintosh alongside the puppet characters. ★★★

3.25 Channel 4 News Including sport and weather.

3.35 Alternative Christmas Message Channel 4's alternative to the Queen's Christmas Day broadcast.

3.45 Scrooged (1988) Christmas comedy, starring Bill Murray. ★★★

5.45 Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (1992) Comedy sequel, starring Macaulay Culkin. ★★★

8.00 Gogglesprogs The nation's children share their opinions on the best and worst of 2015's TV, from the cakes on The Great British Bake off, to big news stories like the general election.

9.00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special The host is joined by Catherine Tate's Nan, Keith Lemon, Lorraine Kelly, Emma Willis and Marvin Humes. Plus, music by Little Mix and One Direction. Last in the series.

11.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Christmas Special A number of familiar faces join host Jimmy Carr and team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson as they cast their eyes over some of the more memorable stories of 2015.

12.05 Very British Problems at Christmas A one-off return for the show. This time famous faces, including David Tennant, James Corden, Romesh Ranganathan, Catherine Tate and Danny Dyer, grumble about the festive season. (R) **1.05 FILM: Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)** A cocky teenager plays truant from school and spends the day dragging his friends into all manner of adventures in the big city. Comedy, starring Matthew Broderick and Mia Sara. ★★★★ **2.50 Friday Night Dinner** Adam finally brings a girl home for dinner. (R) **3.15 Gadget Man** Richard Ayoade takes on the worst of the British weather. (R) **3.40 Gadget Man** Richard Ayoade turns his attention to public transport. (R) **4.10 Benchmark** Game show, hosted by Paddy McGuinness. **4.55 Grand Designs Australia** (R) **5.50 How I Met Your Mother** (R)

CH5

Sinatra 100: An All-Star Grammy Concert, on at 11.05pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.50 Andre Rieu's Christmas Spectacular A seasonal concert by the Dutch violinist and his Johann Strauss Orchestra, featuring performances of O Come All Ye Faithful, Silent Night, Jingle Bells and White Christmas. (R) **10.50 FILM: Scrooge (1970)** A miserly man is taught the error of his ways by a host of spectral visitors. Musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. ★★★ **1.05 FILM: Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954)** A cowboy decides to get married, prompting his six hellraising brothers to kidnap brides for themselves. Stanley Donen's musical Western, starring Howard Keel and Jane Powell. ★★★★

3.10 The Wizard of Oz (1939) Musical fantasy, starring Judy Garland. ★★★★

5.10 Michael Buble's Christmas 2015 Festive special, with guest appearances by Celine Dion, Tori Kelly and Sharon Jones. (R)

6.05 Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs A countdown of songs guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing, including classics by the Jackson 5, Jona Lewie, Band Aid, the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, and Slade. (R)

8.50 Chas & Dave's Xmas Knees Up! Festive entertainment from 1982, with guests including Eric Clapton, Jimmy Cricket, Jim Davidson, Albert Lee and Lennie Peters joining the Cockney duo. (R)

9.40 Britain's Favourite Abba Songs A countdown of the Swedish pop group's 20 most popular songs, with celebrity fans including Jane McDonald and Liz McClarnon introducing their favourite clips. (R)

11.05 Sinatra 100: An All-Star Grammy Concert Celebration of the 100th anniversary of the singer's birth, featuring performances of some of his best-known songs by Tony Bennett, Garth Brooks, Usher and Alicia Keys.

1.25 Abba: Live in Concert The Swedish band in concert during their six-night residence at London's Wembley Arena in November 1979, featuring hits including Voulez-Vous, Dancing Queen and Waterloo. (R) **2.35 SuperCasino** Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **4.00 Christmas with Britain's Biggest Family** The problems posed by the festive season to large families. (R) **4.45 House Doctor** A flat in Kensal Green, west London. (R) **5.10 House Doctor** A property in Spennymoor, Co Durham. (R) **5.35 House Doctor** (R)

Boxing Day

BBC 1

David Jason stars, Still Open All Hours, on at 8.00pm

6.00 Breakfast A round-up of national and international news, plus sports reports, weather forecasts and arts and entertainment features. Including NewsWatch at 7.45. **10.00 Christmas Saturday Kitchen** With Christopher Biggins, Eric Chavot, Pascal Aussignac and Nadiya Hussain. **11.30 James Martin – Home Comforts at Christmas** Transforming leftovers into simple dishes. (R) **12.15 BBC News;** Weather. **12.25 Football Focus** Dan Walker reviews the week's action. **1.00 Comic Relief 2015: Thanks a Billion!** Lenny Henry revisits comedy highlights from this year's charity event. **2.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out** (R) **2.25 A Grand Night In: The Story of Aardman**

Early View

3.25 Puss in Boots (2011) ★★★
4.45 The Croods (2013) ★★★
6.10 Shaun the Sheep: The Farmer's Llamas
6.40 BBC News
6.50 Midlands Today; Weather
7.00 Dickensian New series. Period drama re-imagining the works of Charles Dickens as inter-connected tales, beginning as ruthless debt collector Jacob Marley makes himself an enemy.
7.30 EastEnders Kat tells Martin that Alfie is still in Spain – unaware he is not far behind her – and Dean is angry with Shirley after she ruins his plans for Christmas dinner.
8.00 Still Open All Hours Granville and Gastric try to get Madge into the festive spirit by organising a cosy drinks party, while a bargain Christmas tree causes problems.
8.30 Dickensian Christmas Day arrives and Inspector Bucket begins his investigation into Jacob Marley's murder, and at Satis House, Amelia Havisham's mysterious rescuer makes another appearance.
9.00 And Then There Were None New series. Ten strangers are stranded on a remote island, and learn there may be a killer in their midst. Period mystery, starring Anna Maxwell Martin. Continues tomorrow.
10.00 BBC News; Weather.
10.20 The National Lottery Live Ore Oduba with the all-important Lotto and Thunderball draws.
10.30 Match of the Day Gary Lineker presents highlights of the full programme of Premier League games, including Chelsea v Watford, Manchester City v Sunderland and Stoke City v Manchester United; National Lottery Update
12.05 FILM: The Guardian (2006) ★★★ **2.15 Weather for the Week Ahead 2.20 BBC News**

BBC 2

Russell Howard stars, A Gert Lush Christmas, on at 9.00pm

6.00 Race to Super Bowl 50 Action from the week 15 fixtures. (R) **6.50 Flog It!** Making a profit at auction. **7.35 FILM: Tom Thumb (1958)** A miniature boy foils the schemes of a pair of crooks and helps a kind musician find true love. Children's musical fantasy, starring Russ Tamblyn, Terry-Thomas and Peter Sellers. ★★★ **9.05 FILM: Hotel for Dogs (2009)** Family comedy, starring Emma Roberts. ★★★ **10.35 Ten Pieces II** The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and guests perform recitals of 10 classical works. **11.35 FILM: G-Force (2009)** Children's adventure, starring Bill Nighy. ★★ **1.00 Attenborough's Big Birds: Natural World** (R) **2.00 Attenborough's Paradise Birds** (R)

3.00 Bedtime Stories (2008) Fantasy comedy, starring Adam Sandler. ★★★
4.30 Final Score A round-up of this afternoon's football results.
5.30 Don't Panic! The Dad's Army Story (R)
6.20 We're Doomed!: The Dad's Army Story (R)
7.20 Dad's Army Frazer is unable to hide his delight when Captain Mainwaring's disreputable brother gatecrashes a sherry party for local dignitaries. Classic comedy, starring Arthur Lowe. (R)
8.00 Top Gear: From A to Z John Bishop narrates the first of two programmes celebrating the highlights of the Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond era, via an alphabetical list.
9.00 A Gert Lush Christmas Comedian Russell Howard's debut comedy drama. Dan Colman is about to introduce the woman of his dreams to his crazy but adorable family at Christmas, but it may not go to plan.
10.00 Abz on the Christmas Farm Abz Love and his girlfriend Vicky Fallon spend Christmas reflecting on the successes and failures of their year running a smallholder farm in Wales.
10.30 Backchat End of Year Show 2015 Jack Whitehall and his father Michael review the past 12 months, picking apart some of the highs and lows of 2015 in an end-of-year special.
11.15 Kinky Boots (2005) A man inherits a struggling shoe factory and finds salvation for his business in a drag artist's need for custom footwear. Comedy drama, starring Chiwetel Ejiofor and Joel Edgerton. ★★★
1.00 FILM: Marnie (1964) ★★★ **3.05 Sign Zone: Imagine – The Ecstasy of Wilko Johnson** (R) **4.40 This Is BBC Two**

ITV

Holly Willoughby presents, Surprise Surprise on at 7.00pm

6.00 CITV: Fort Boyard Ultimate Challenge. (R) **6.25 Pat & Stan** (R) **6.30 Pat & Stan** (R) **6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures** (R) **6.50 Dino Dan** (R) **7.00 Signed Stories: Share a Story** (R) **7.05 Oddbods** (R) **7.10 Sooty** (R) **7.25 Super 4** (R) **7.40 Mr Bean: The Animated Series** (R) **7.50 Mr Bean: The Animated Series** (R) **8.00 The Aquabats! Super Show!** (R) **8.30 Thunderbirds Are Go 9.00 The Tom & Jerry Show** (R) **9.15 The Tom & Jerry Show** (R) **9.25 Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas** (R) **10.25 You've Been Framed!** (R) **10.55 FILM: Back to the Future Part III (1990)** ★★★ **1.05 ITV News and Weather 1.20 FILM: Jurassic Park (1993)** Action adventure, starring Sam Neill. ★★★★

3.40 Midsomer Murders A man's apparent suicide shocks the village of Morton Fendle – but things take a sinister turn when Barnaby and Jones discover the victim was not alone when he died. (R)
5.40 ITV News and Weather
6.00 The Nation's Favourite Disney Song
7.00 Surprise Surprise Holly Willoughby delivers Christmas presents to members of the public, including an injured soldier preparing to row across the Atlantic and a young heart transplant survivor.
8.00 Peter & Wendy Lucy Rose, a 12-year-old girl with a serious heart condition, is admitted to St Ormond Street Hospital to await treatment. On the night before her operation, Lucy reads JM Barrie's tale of Peter Pan to her fellow patients, and as she eventually drifts off to sleep, her dreaming mind conjures up the magical world of Neverland.
10.05 The Jonathan Ross Show Christmas Special The host presents a Boxing Day special in which he dispenses with his no-holds-barred questions, and instead invites guests to take part in light-hearted games.
11.10 ITV News Including Regional News and ITV Weather; Weather.
11.25 From Russia with Love (1963) James Bond is assigned to steal a top-secret Soviet decoding machine – but the mission is a trap set by crime syndicate Spectre. Spy thriller, with Sean Connery and Robert Shaw. ★★★
1.25 Jackpot247 Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00 Murder, She Wrote** Cabot Cove becomes the scene of deadly competition when an eccentric recluse dies, and Jessica is given the dubious honour of executing the woman's will. (R)

CH4

George Clooney stars, Fantastic Mr Fox, on at 11.25am

6.15 FILM: Ramona and Beezus (2010) Family comedy, starring Joey King. ★★★ **8.00 The Morning Line** Nick Luck and guests are at Kempton Park to preview today's races. **9.00 The Big Bang Theory** Leonard fails to get Sheldon into the Christmas mood. (R) **9.30 The Big Bang Theory** The gang reflects on how Sheldon has changed their lives. (R) **10.00 The Big Bang Theory** (R) **10.25 The Simpsons** (R) **10.55 The Simpsons** (R) **11.25 FILM: Fantastic Mr Fox (2009)** A fox gives up stealing chickens in favour of family life, but a new challenge is too tempting. Stop-motion animated adventure, with the voices of George Clooney and Meryl Streep. ★★★ **1.10 Channel 4 Racing**

3.30 Home Alone 3 (1997) Comedy sequel, starring Alex D Linz. ★★★
5.25 Channel 4 News Including sport and weather.
5.35 The Secret Life of Children at Christmas The children are reunited to perform their own nativity play. (R)
6.30 Britain's Favourite Children's Books with David Walliams The comedy actor counts down through a list of the nation's most beloved children's books, while other celebrity fans read extracts from the selected tales.
8.00 Inside Lego at Christmas Cameras return to the Lego factory ahead of Christmas to discover how staff prepare for the festive season, which accounts for more than half of the firm's annual sales.
9.00 The Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2015 Rob Brydon, Sue Perkins, David Mitchell, Claudia Winkleman, Greg Davies and Jo Brand reveal whether they have their fingers on the pulse of modern life in the annual quiz.
11.05 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker Alex Zane presents 50 festive internet clips that have proved popular around the world, including a turkey with a boob job and an inventive Christmas tree decoration-remover. (R)
12.10 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special The host is joined by Catherine Tate's Nan, Keith Lemon, Lorraine Kelly, Emma Willis and Marvin Humes. Plus, music by Little Mix and One Direction. Last in the series. (R) **2.05 Rude Tube** Alex Zane counts down the Top 50 online videos devoted to love and marriage. **3.00 Hollyoaks** Omnibus. Ziggy and Celine find Ste sleeping outside after another binge and rush him to hospital, while Reenie receives a invitation to Derek's will reading. (R) **5.10 Location, Location, Location** Two families who were selling up to fund a business. (R)

CH5

Festive cheer, Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud, on at 7.05pm

6.00 Milkshake! 9.10 The Saturday Show Matt Barbet and Gaby Roslin present the topical show with three celebrity guests, who discuss the week's headlines, as well as viral videos and the latest TV and film releases. **11.10 The Dog Rescuers at Christmas with Alan Davies** QI regular and comedian Alan Davies throws a party for some of the stars of the series, and award-winning RSPCA officer Derek Hampson hands out presents to rescue dogs across England and Wales. (R) **12.10 The Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe** Biopic exploring how the actress and sex symbol managed to hide her most intimate secrets from the press, even at the height of her fame. Starring Kelli Garner and Susan Sarandon.

3.15 Diana (2013) Premiere. Fact-based drama, starring Naomi Watts and Naveen Andrews. ★
5.05 One Chance (2013) Premiere. Fact-based comedy drama, starring James Corden. ★★★
7.05 Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud Iain Lee presents Christmas-themed videos that have taken the internet by storm in a seasonal special showcasing hilarious online clips with a festive twist. (R)
8.05 Chas & Dave's Xmas Knees Up! Festive entertainment from 1982, which sees the Cockney duo joined by celebrity guests Eric Clapton, Jimmy Cricket, Jim Davidson, Albert Lee and Lennie Peters. (R)
9.00 Football League Tonight: Boxing Day Special Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the packed Boxing Day fixture list, including Hull City v Burnley and Derby County v Fulham in the Championship.
10.30 Most Shocking Christmas TV Moments A merry romp through the most inappropriate, outrageous and appallingly atrocious Christmas television turkeys of all time, featuring contributions from some of those involved.
12.30 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! Christmas Special The world of debt collection during the festive period. (R) **1.25 SuperCasino** Live interactive gaming. **3.10 Kids' Hospital at Christmas: Revisited** Catching up with the six children who featured in the series. (R) **4.00 Chris Tarrant on the Polar Express** Chris embarks on a 2,000-mile railway trip from Moscow to Arctic Siberia. (R) **4.50 Make It Big** The raffle money goes missing. (R) **5.15 Make It Big** First episode of the reality show following 12 young entrepreneurs. (R) **5.45 Angels of Jarm** (R) **5.50 Angels of Jarm** Bindi is jealous of Jess's new coat. (R)

Prime Time

3.00 Bedtime Stories (2008) Fantasy comedy, starring Adam Sandler. ★★★
4.30 Final Score A round-up of this afternoon's football results.
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Late View

12.05 FILM: The Guardian (2006) ★★★ **2.15 Weather for the Week Ahead 2.20 BBC News**

3.40 Midsomer Murders A man's apparent suicide shocks the village of Morton Fendle – but things take a sinister turn when Barnaby and Jones discover the victim was not alone when he died. (R)
5.40 ITV News and Weather
6.00 The Nation's Favourite Disney Song
7.00 Surprise Surprise Holly Willoughby delivers Christmas presents to members of the public, including an injured soldier preparing to row across the Atlantic and a young heart transplant survivor.
8.00 Peter & Wendy Lucy Rose, a 12-year-old girl with a serious heart condition, is admitted to St Ormond Street Hospital to await treatment. On the night before her operation, Lucy reads JM Barrie's tale of Peter Pan to her fellow patients, and as she eventually drifts off to sleep, her dreaming mind conjures up the magical world of Neverland.
10.05 The Jonathan Ross Show Christmas Special The host presents a Boxing Day special in which he dispenses with his no-holds-barred questions, and instead invites guests to take part in light-hearted games.
11.10 ITV News Including Regional News and ITV Weather; Weather.
11.25 From Russia with Love (1963) James Bond is assigned to steal a top-secret Soviet decoding machine – but the mission is a trap set by crime syndicate Spectre. Spy thriller, with Sean Connery and Robert Shaw. ★★★
1.25 Jackpot247 Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00 Murder, She Wrote** Cabot Cove becomes the scene of deadly competition when an eccentric recluse dies, and Jessica is given the dubious honour of executing the woman's will. (R)

3.15 Diana (2013) Premiere. Fact-based drama, starring Naomi Watts and Naveen Andrews. ★
5.05 One Chance (2013) Premiere. Fact-based comedy drama, starring James Corden. ★★★
7.05 Christmas Makes You Laugh Out Loud Iain Lee presents Christmas-themed videos that have taken the internet by storm in a seasonal special showcasing hilarious online clips with a festive twist. (R)
8.05 Chas & Dave's Xmas Knees Up! Festive entertainment from 1982, which sees the Cockney duo joined by celebrity guests Eric Clapton, Jimmy Cricket, Jim Davidson, Albert Lee and Lennie Peters. (R)
9.00 Football League Tonight: Boxing Day Special Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the packed Boxing Day fixture list, including Hull City v Burnley and Derby County v Fulham in the Championship.
10.30 Most Shocking Christmas TV Moments A merry romp through the most inappropriate, outrageous and appallingly atrocious Christmas television turkeys of all time, featuring contributions from some of those involved.
12.30 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! Christmas Special The world of debt collection during the festive period. (R) **1.25 SuperCasino** Live interactive gaming. **3.10 Kids' Hospital at Christmas: Revisited** Catching up with the six children who featured in the series. (R) **4.00 Chris Tarrant on the Polar Express** Chris embarks on a 2,000-mile railway trip from Moscow to Arctic Siberia. (R) **4.50 Make It Big** The raffle money goes missing. (R) **5.15 Make It Big** First episode of the reality show following 12 young entrepreneurs. (R) **5.45 Angels of Jarm** (R) **5.50 Angels of Jarm** Bindi is jealous of Jess's new coat. (R)

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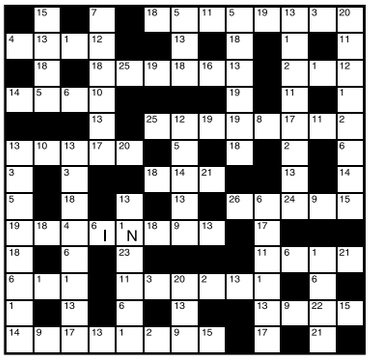
Dudley Chronicle Thursday, December 24, 2015

BRAIN GYM No.357

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



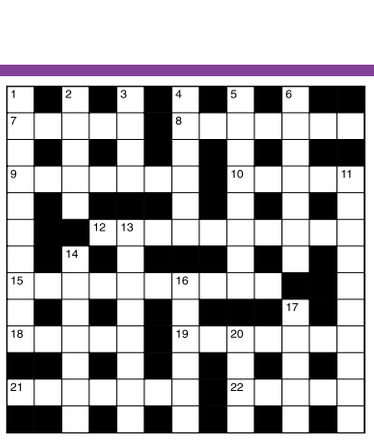
1 N	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6 I	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
X	U	A	K	H	Z	F	Y	P	R	C	W	D
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
J	T	I	B	Q	V	E	L	N	G	O	M	S

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. Jovial fellow right for cutting (5)
8. Ashamed - got rid of a graduate (7)
9. Practised player gets well-used set of cards (3,4)
10. The chosen beginning of a power source (5)
12. Give way and tolerate a team (5,5)
15. It's unlikely that one politician can wear a gown (10)
18. There will be some on the staff, of course (5)
19. Dissipated sea-creature joins the air force (7)
21. Grimly holding the back end of the ship? (7)
22. It's more pleasant right by French resort (5)

Down

1. Pardon graduate getting up to answer (10)
2. Vehicles containing 500 pieces for game (5)
3. Gamble on article from the Greek alphabet (4)
4. Irritate mother animal going up to lair (6)
5. Game played at HQ dance (8)
6. I re-echo such a greeting (7)
11. Be comforted in that place twice (5,5)
13. A large number of old-fashioned pronouns also (8)
14. Picked out rashly, so to speak? (7)
16. Dresses youth leader in tapestry (6)
17. Black, sticky stuff suitable for playing games on (5)
20. An excellent punishment (4)

Quick Clues:

Across

7. Drive (5)
8. Egg white (7)
9. Food (7)
10. Drift (5)
12. Belligerent (10)
15. Generous (4-6)
18. Shade (5)
19. Nomad (7)
21. Yield (7)
22. Reject scornfully (5)

Down

1. Uneasiness (10)
2. Foam (5)
3. Too (4)
4. Transmit (4,2)
5. Impediment (8)
6. Sovereign (7)
11. Dissatisfaction (10)
13. Ignored (8)
14. Signification (7)
16. Figure (6)
17. Compass (5)
20. Pant (4)

Sudoku

		2		4		9		3
		6	1				4	
9					5			6
	6				7		9	
3				1				2
	8	9	2		3		7	
8			3					9
	7				1	8	6	
6				5		2		7

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

6	4	5	1	8	9	7	2	3
8	7	9	4	2	3	6	1	5
3	1	2	5	6	7	4	8	9
1	3	6	7	9	2	8	5	4
9	5	7	6	4	8	2	3	1
2	8	4	3	1	5	9	6	7
4	2	8	9	5	1	3	7	6
5	9	3	8	7	6	1	4	2
7	6	1	2	3	4	5	9	8

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Enable; 8 Matter; 10 Outside; 11 Avoid; 12 None; 13 Stole; 17 David; 18 Vote; 22 Least; 23 Outpost; 24 Strife; 25 Cutler. Down: 1 Resound; 2 Casting 3 Plain; 4 Capable; 5 Stood; 6 Bride; 9 Test pilot; 14 Mastiff; 15 Monocle; 16 Letters; 19 Class; 20 Harry; 21 Stout. QUICK - Across: 7 Return; 8 Quiver; 10 Diction; 11 Forge; 12 Club; 13 Grain; 17 Slide; 18 Gain; 22 Maxim; 23 Explain; 24 Clergy; 25 Joyous. Down: 1 Produce; 2 Stuck-up; 3 Krait; 4 Surfeit; 5 Avert; 6 Greed; 9 Unbridled; 14 Plumage; 15 Paragon; 16 Oneness; 19 Smack; 20 Expel; 21 Spool.

Thinking space

Quiz

1. Who was the Leader of the House of Commons from 1976-9?
2. In which country is the Athos peninsula?
3. Who was the companion of Don Quixote?
4. In which two months are the Dog-days?
5. To which crop is the Colorado Beetle a serious pest?
6. What is the gnu also known as?
7. Of what family is the Guinea-Pig a member?
8. How many gallons did a kilderkin once represent?
9. Which is the brightest of the planets?
10. In which country is Innsbruck?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Exodus; 2 The Tempest; 3 1965; 4 Klaus Barbie; 5 25; 6 June 6th; 7 Jane Austen; 8 Canada; 9 Czech; 10 Painting.

Niner: SECTIONAL

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

456298 gives a dance,
1534 gives a movie,
4785699 gives a performance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Definitely worth a visit – Spices, Walsall Road, Bridgtown, Cannock

The spacious interior has comfortable seating

Manager Ali, left pictured with Head Chef Anwar at Spices

New restaurant where menu variety was definitely the Spice of life for my family

IT'S always a shame when a long-standing pub shuts down – and these days it happens all too frequently.

But sometimes a successful, new venture fills the void. And that is exactly what Spices Restaurant has done in Bridgtown, Cannock.

Its former presence as a pub has not been completely forgotten, though. The Bridgetown Tavern – with an 'e' unlike the village it stands in – was a popular local, but after its unexpected closure around three years ago, Syed Ali stepped in to turn it into an Indian restaurant.

Ali already runs restaurants in Sedgley and Wednesbury but when the Cannock area was suggested, he was not put off by the plethora of eateries already in the area.

"I know there were a lot of restaurants, but that means there are a lot of eaters," he said.

Cleverly, though, while identifying the need to cater for a growing clientele, he has steered clear of the main cluster of restaurants, thus avoiding where his main competition would be.

Beams

Spices lies on a main road through the village, ideal for passing trade but far enough away from the town centre saturation.

Some of the pub's old features remain, though, including the centrepiece bar. It is because of this that the interior doesn't have that feel of a contemporary diner – and it's all the better for it.

Alterations have been made of course, but

Mark Shipp tucks in

the exposed brickwork and beams give it a more homely feeling. Tables are set out to cater for parties of diners, or families, and it is this set up that Ali, as he prefers to be known, prides his operation on.

I dined with my family, and truth to be told, it was an evening that money couldn't buy. We had proper conversations, we could hear ourselves talk. There were other diners, but no-one too loud or boisterous – and, where else could you dine out to a background soundtrack that included Stevie Wonder, The Three Degrees and Simply Red? Not all my cup of tea, but certainly an eclectic mix.

Ali and his staff, there are 14 employed in all, took time out to chat to us and check everything was okay, while being fully aware that other diners needed attention, too. What's more the food was enjoyed by all four of us. From a menu that featured a seemingly endless list of Spices exclusives and recommended dishes like the khunda, the choice was certainly extensive.

Perfect

Ali spoke highly of his team of chefs, who like to add new lines on a regular basis and welcome comments from customers on favoured or requested dishes. They didn't let us down here.

Now I wouldn't say a fish dish is my favourite curry, but to quote the legendary philosopher Brian Clough "it's in the top one." I was in my element here as I was allowed to try two, the mach palak – pan-fried sea bass fillets in a medium sauce with spinach and potatoes, complemented by lemon rice and naan bread, and the kanda wala machli, fish cooked in a lemon and coriander sauce. It's easy to say when being looked after for the purpose of a review that everything was OK. Often little things go wrong or not something is not quite right. It's human nature. However, this was a night when absolutely everything was perfect.

A more pleasant 'mein host' you could not wish to meet, in impressive surroundings, with a just-right atmosphere and terrific food.

It seems that Ali has it spot-on, and his regular diners – he caters for 70 but that can be extended – are proof of the quality served up.

For the record, the better half's makani bhuna and the children's tikka masala and chips were well received, too.

Spices is open from 5.30 to 11pm between Tuesday and Sunday. Call 01543 502767.

ADVERTISEMENT

No fixative, no surgery and the potential to fix denture stabilisation problems

Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS (Eng) with dentist Dr Polly Mineva, and right, technicians working on suction technology dentures

Suction solution

DENTAL technician Steve Morris carefully crafts a denture, ensuring that a small aperture on the side of the prosthetic will be able to accommodate a tiny valve.

The denture looks like any other, but the clever diaphragm development to help hold it secure can give it the edge over its traditional counterparts.

"It's clever stuff," says Steve (GDC 142474), "a small diaphragm seals off a one-way valve under bite pressure, creating a vacuum between the denture and gums. The result is a better fit to the soft tissues and improved resistance to any dislodging forces created by eating and speaking."

Steak for dinner

For the right person, the Ultra Suction Solution can remedy common denture stability problems without surgery and messy fixatives.

"We recently manufactured a second prescription for a patient. We knew the fit was as perfect as it could possibly be, but I was amazed when they called the lab to tell us they'd been on their initial 'test run' with a steak for dinner.

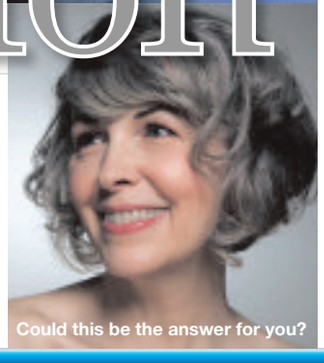
"The patient was very happy with the outcome," adds Steve.

The Suction Solution option attracts the biggest number of inquiries at the Denture Clinic in North Street, Dudley.

Principal Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS(Eng) GDC 108353, who heads the team at his multi-disciplined practice says: "We have always endeavoured to be on the very cusp of clinical development and this device is another useful option in our commitment to try to deliver results greater than patient expectations."

Historically, lower dentures can present stability problems as the jawbone erodes with age. With traditional dentures this can cause lower teeth to move and result in painful friction problems on gums.

The suction device can be mounted in upper or lower dentures and due to its efficiency the size of the acrylic 'plate' can sometimes be reduced, improving speech and taste.



Could this be the answer for you?

"I need to stress, however, the option is not suitable for all, but a single, free initial consultation would determine whether it could be the way forward. We never sell solutions here, but provide honest, comprehensive, clinical appraisals that help patients make informed choices," says Steven.

To achieve an harmonious fit, Denture Clinic prescriptions are 'set' using a Biofunctional Prosthetics System (BPS) which helps accurately replicate natural teeth anatomy during the production process.

"The fit is stunningly accurate," he adds.

Typically, denture patients will be assigned more than three-and-a-half hours of surgery time in achieving the best possible outcome.

Scanner

The Denture Clinic operates hand-in-glove with Steven's North Street Dental & Implant Clinic operation.

"Having everything under one roof – denture provision, general dentistry and dental implant provision – gives us a huge set of solutions and a deep pool of clinical skill from which we can draw.

"With a 3-D scanner, modern and air conditioned surgeries and a creative team, I believe we are strongly placed to tackle most problems," says Steven.

Steven, whose clinics attracts patients from as far as Portugal, Spain, the Isle of Skye and the Isle of Anglesey, adds: "Implant dentistry is the ultimate, long-term solution for denture stability problems, but it is not suitable for everyone, neither is it all patients' first preference.

"The beauty of the suction technology is that it has the potential to deliver in the right patient excellent retainer qualities without the complex clinical procedures required for implant work."

For appointments at all clinics call
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Switch to safer winter tyres

As cold weather approaches, local Vauxhall retailer, Stourbridge Motor House, is making it simple for Vauxhall owners in Stourbridge to make the switch to safer winter tyres with the opening of its Tyre Hotel.

Ensuring that summer tyres are kept in tip top condition, they will be treated to a valet on arrival and regularly rotated to prevent warping. Each tyre will be properly labelled and kept away from any substances that could cause deterioration or damage to the rubber.

Michael Casey, general manager at Stourbridge Motor House, said: "Although the safety implications of changing your tyres are clear, unfortunately motorists are often reluctant to swap their wheels because of storage issues.

"When customers purchase winter tyres, we will whisk their summer set away to one of nine Tyre Hotels across the country. Customer service is paramount for us therefore motorists can expect a swift check-in by one of our knowledgeable service team."

Essentially when the temperature drops below seven degrees, winter tyres use a rubber compound with high silica content and have a specially designed tread pattern to perform better in colder conditions by providing increased grip on the road.

Running alongside the Tyre Hotel, Stourbridge Motor House is offering area winter safety checks until March 31, 2016. The check is £19.99 and comprises a 25 point visual health check and top-ups of coolant, brake fluid, screen wash and engine oil.*

For more information about the Tyre Hotel or the winter safety checks, contact Stourbridge Motor House at High Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 4DG. Alternatively, go online to www.stourbridgemotorhouse.co.uk or call 01384 447970.

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Tivoli a pleasant surprise

By Ian Donaldson

A smattering of Spanish would have come in handy in deepest Bedfordshire as we tried to tell the SsangYong's sat nav to take us back to base.

Someone had set the system for the land of paella and siestas and instructions came out of the Tivoli's dashboard with a softly spoken southern inflection, which sounded lovely but meant precious little.

But you don't keep a motoring writer from his lunch and the destination was eventually plumbed into the TomTom and away we went – in a car that was proving a bit of a surprise. Taking us on the mystery tour of an unheralded but handsome part of middle England was the latest model of a car you probably haven't heard of yet – the SsangYong Tivoli.

Built in South Korea by a company known until now for its range of tough but basic machines, many with an off-road potential, the Tivoli marks a serious move towards European respectability, where mere cheapness doesn't always succeed.

A decade or so ago a couple of other Koreans – Hyundai and Kia – began their climb upmarket and have succeeded beyond perhaps even their dreams. Can SsangYong do it too?

The earlier Tivoli versions, arriving mid-2015 made a firm case for a positive answer – 'yes!' – and at prices that start at £12,950 for a front-driver with petrol engine.

Which makes it great value rather than an absolute steal; often a sign that makers reckons their cars are now good enough to entice buyers without needing a bargain basement price tag.

SsangYong was right; the first Tivolis were decent enough to drive and very well kitted out for the money.

They also felt better put together (on the inside in particular) than opposition selling for more.

But what about a Tivoli selling for more than £20,000 when you've added metallic paint (£500) and a £400 styling pack with fancy alloys, black roof, spoiler and door mirrors? That's moving the car deep into the European mainstream, where you'll find a host of smart cars looking for style-savvy buyers.

Well, driving is believing and SsangYong has a winner on its hands, so long as it can persuade you to sit in the car and then take it for a drive.

Should your route take in a deep waterhole and a couple of crazily angled slopes, the admiration factor will ramp up quickly. For here is a car that genuinely surprised in places no sane owner will ever take it. A winter's drive home on snowy roads is going to be chicken feed for this newest version of the Tivoli.

The all-wheel drive system puts all the power through the front wheels until it detects slippage, when the rears are instantly brought into action. This ought to mean better fuel economy than in a car with all the wheels working all the time.

You can have a six-speed manual gearbox or an automatic unit in your Tivoli 4x4 but both will be powered by the same 1.6 diesel engine that became an option in the 2WD range some months ago.

It produces 113bhp, enough for 107mph top speed with the auto box and the sprint to 62mph in 12.3 seconds (109mph/12.0 seconds for the manual), with the auto 'box hitting emissions and fuel consumption, so that the figures of 156g/km and 47.9mpg average look underwhelming – stick to the DIY gearbox and things improve to 123g/km and 60.1mpg.

Out on proper road surfaces the diesel auto 4x4 Tivoli hums along nicely, allowing you to admire its fit and finish and start to take in the goodies that this top version has on board.

Standard kit on the ELX includes satellite navigation (Spanish is optional!), a superbly clear reversing camera, leather upholstery and heated front seats, climate control, keyless entry and start, auto dipping interior mirror, cruise control and (hurrah), a space saver spare wheel.

The ELX 4x4 auto costs £19,500, a six-speed manual is £1,000 less and the EX 4x4 diesel with a bit less kit is £17,100.

Ssangyong thinks 500 people will take a Tivoli 4x4 in 2016.

They may be surprised, especially if they can persuade showroom visitors to take a drive.

Well, driving is believing and SsangYong has a winner on its hands, so long as it can persuade you to sit in the car.

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New Subaru delivering on power and style

By John Griffiths

Subaru's new Levorg sports tourer is a distinctive, all-new model which poses something of a conundrum.

It is genuinely a competitor for many of the premium brand rivals in terms of performance, equipment and particularly space, as well as sporty good looks (from the front it bears a striking resemblance to the iconic WRX STi).

You also get a lot for your money at £27,495, but there's the rub: That's not 'from', that's THE price because there is only one model. It's powered by a new and highly-efficient 1.6 direct injection turbo petrol engine, and bearing in mind this is a car likely to appeal strongly to business users, there's no diesel option. Yet Subaru spent years (and a lot of money) developing a very good diesel version of its signature 'boxer' flat-four motor.

It may be because Subaru is unashamedly a 'niche' rather than a volume manufacturer. But perhaps it is also dipping its toes in the water and assessing the views of its dealers and customers before widening the range.

The Levorg is a distinctive model. While it has sporting looks, it has more room than the majority of pseudo-SUVs which are increasingly popular, plus the benefit of all-wheel drive, all-weather stability which all but a few of that genre lack.

If you want to get yourself noticed in the company car park, or on the road, the Levorg could be for you.

It's quick enough (0 to 62mph) in 8.9 seconds, yet is still capable of averaging nearly 45mpg which is good for a 4WD petrol car of this size.

And inside it is bigger than it looks, with a 522-litre boot (rising to 1,446 litres with the rear seats folded) and is more than a match for most of its premium rivals for passenger space, particularly when it comes to rear leg room.

It also has, as Subaru is quick to point out, the most luxurious interior the company has ever produced.

Successor

The Levorg is the spiritual successor to the late-lamented (by Subaru enthusiasts, anyway) Legacy, a sort of grown up version of the overtly sporting Impreza. But it is actually based on the 2003 fourth generation Legacy, not the less popular fifth generation model, while the once top-of-the-range Legacy Outback has evolved into a separate model in its own right, much beloved by the likes of country vets.

While the Legacy was also a saloon, the biggest seller was the estate format so it's logical that Subaru would choose this style for the Levorg.

But it's no chunky load-lugger: sports tourer is an apt description since its front end mirrors that of the mighty WRX rally car (complete with signature bonnet air scoop) and has a sleek, low-slung look despite the big 18in alloy wheels. .

It drives well, too. The 1.6 turbo engine has the classic 'boxer' sound; and 170PS of power with a useful 250 NM of torque available from low revs. Available only with Subaru's Lineartronic CVT automatic transmission, it's a bit of a smoothy, with a burst of overtaking acceleration available at the touch of your right foot.With the press of a button on the steering wheel, you can sharpen up engine and throttle responses for a sportier drive, and control gear changes with the 'paddles' behind the steering wheel

It is sure footed, with quick and precise steering so that it never feels like a big car.

It has the latest versions of Subaru's all-wheel drive and vehicle dynamic control systems, well proven over the years on the rally-bred Impreza and WRX.

In normal driving 60 per cent of power goes to the front, and 40 to the rear. But if the electronics detect any slippage, a higher portion of power is diverted to the rear to maintain stability and traction in a wide variety of conditions.

There's also an active torque vectoring system, which brakes the outside wheels under heavy cornering to give you a neutral line through bends, avoiding over or under steer,

There's a new suspension system, too, beefed up to reduce pitch and roll under hard cornering, but it's well damped so the ride quality doesn't suffer.

Inside, the Levorg lives up to Subaru's billing. Wider than the old Legacy, it comes with a single 'GT' trim level which includes leather trim, heated front seats (with electric adjustment for the driver), stainless steel sill plates and pedals, automatic wipers, front and side window defrosters, dual-zone air conditioning, multi-function steering wheel, and a central touchscreen control system for audio and connectivity functions, which also serves as the reversing camera screen.

The safety package includes multiple airbags, hill start assist and brake assist as well as the electronic stability systems, plus lane-change, blind-spot and 'rear-crossing' alert systems.

The Levorg has a 1,500kg towing limit. Its official economy figure is 44.8mpg, with a CO2 emissions rating of 164g/km.

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TARA 22 tall slim but curvy with legs that go all the way up to heaven, WLTM very appreciative confident male for adult fun. Contact me anytime. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414701**

FEMALE, dark haired 5'10, curvy, likes reading, walking, cinema, seeks male 40-50 for lasting relationship. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5077545**

PROFESSIONAL black female age 52, enjoys evenings and days out, would like to meet similar Midlands male. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5315901**

CATHY, 42, good looking brunette with a real passion for life, seeking male for happy times, dates, chats, romance and more. Pls call. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420073**

KELLY young attractive vivacious 48yr old lady, loves good food, cosy nights in/out, holidays etc, WLTM male for mutual companionship **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420195**

39 yr old independent single Mom, knows the benefit of having a good man in the picture. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5084796**

SARAH, curvaceous brunette, 35, passionate nature, solvent, OHAC, WLTM date again, looking for male to take me out. Looks/Age unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420207**

FELICITY, 38yrs, attractive, petite but shapely lady seeks gent for indoor activities! Age/looks/marital status unimportant but must be discreet and non demanding. **Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 420235**

FREYA 24yr old single mum, looking for male for free time frolics, call me if you're interested, it could be fun! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419851**

LISA 38 slim attractive blonde, looking for a man who will appreciate a feminine, fashionable, fun, romantic sensual woman with a mind of her own. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419839**

SARAH 38, slim, nice looking, sensual, tactile, no ties, WLTM kind, loving male to enjoy affectionate relationship. Any age/looks. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419821**

PAT 66, attractive, N/S, likes reading, nights out, seeks gent for friendship, days out and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418277**

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LADY Penelope seeks her very own Parker (47-58) to go on a voyage of discovery and romance. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4550237**

BLACK lady seeks white male over 60, any location, for friendship and hopefully a lot more. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4256384**

68YR old widow, attractive, seeks sincere, N/S male, likes reading, meals out and walks. West Midlands. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414773**

JULIA 47, looking for genuine, reasonably attractive male friend, may to lead to more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419695**

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

BLUE eyed female, blonde hair, slim, GSOH, loving, caring, understanding, seeking similar male, 55-55. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416989**

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418117**

CAROL Ann, sensitive slim brunette very romantic seeks tall handsome male for fun, friendship and lots of TLC. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419385**

KIRSTEN, 36, attractive, blonde and very bored, seeking open-minded decent male for fun/friendship, 40-60yrs. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419383**

VAL 41, pretty, cuddly, flirty, seeks similar fun loving male for an uncomplicated no strings relationship. Age/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416601**

MID naughty forties female looking fun, thrills and discreet meets, give me a call, you wont be disappointed. Any age with own accommodation. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409109**

DIVORCED female, attractive, sensual by nature, OHAC, bored with own company, looking to make life a little more exciting with likeminded man. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419219**

LINDA, 47, brown-eyed blonde, caring, loving and honest, many interests, seeks genuine male to share lonely evenings with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417211**

JOYCE, affectionate sensitive widow, bit of a romantic, seeks loving male for lots of TLC. Looks unimportant, it's what's in the heart that matters. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419143**

DEBBIE, 29, looking for mature professional fun guy, 40-50 to spend good times with. Call me, you have nothing to lose. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419075**

FEMALE fun brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416287**

CHARLENE, 24, petite curvy young blonde seeks similar cheeky, fun loving guy for lots of fun and loving. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419597**

JOANNA, 36, petite, auburn haired female, lovely figure seeks loving older male for fun nights out and cosy nights in. Maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419595**

SHARON 32, attractive black single mum of one, very tactile and passionate, WLTM male 45-65yrs for fun meets. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419579**

MARIE, 43, fun blue-eyed brunette, fit and active, seeks similar male to have a laugh with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419417**

KAREN 50, widow, likes swimming, horse riding, keep fit, clay pigeon shooting, GSOH, N/S, non drinker, seeks male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415211**

CURVY, farm girl at heart, 32, 5ft 10, single mum, caring, kind, shy, likes walks, cooking WLTM tactile male farmer for LTR. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5067001**

FEMALE medium build, blonde hair, 5ft 5ins, seeks male, 50-58, GSOH, loving, caring and understanding. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415429**

WIDOW 50, blonde hair, GSOH, 5ft 5ins, slim, seeks male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415767**

MARIE, 43, fun blue-eyed brunette, fit and active, seeks similar male to have a laugh with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419417**

FEMALE 50's, 5ft 5ins, blonde hair, blue eyes, slim, seeks gent with GSOH, loving, caring and understanding. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 415871**

VIRGINIA, outgoing social female, 24, tall slim and attractive, looking for fun times, maybe more. Can accommodate/travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418845**

LOOKING for the right chemistry with country loving gent who like me is looking for some extra fun in their life. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418843**

JAN 35yr old blue eyed blonde, outgoing, friendly, WLTM passionate guy to share good wine, good conversation, flirting and fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418609**

ATTRACTIVE professional lady, widow, 50's, likes walks, sight seeing, theatre, meals out, seeks genuine, professional gent, 5ft 9ins plus to make life more enjoyable. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418615**

JAN 35yr old blue eyed blonde, outgoing, friendly, WLTM passionate guy to share good wine, good conversation, flirting and fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418609**

SENSUAL tactile, attractive female, long blonde hair, blue eyes, loves travel, wining/dining, WLTM genuine male for mutual companionship. Looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418587**

JULES, sensitive tactile, curvy brunette, hopeless romantic, seeks tall, loving male for fun, friendship and possible LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419033**

VIRGINIA, outgoing social female, 24, tall slim and attractive, looking for fun times, maybe more. Can accommodate/travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418845**

HEATHER, well travelled solvent brunette looking to share a large glass of wine and whatever follows with affectionate man friend. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419031**

PAULINE, 49yrs, very attractive, curvy divorcee, affectionate and fun, seeks laid back, sincere male for an uncomplicated, loving relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418925**

LADY young at heart, nice eyes, seeks man 42-52 with good sense of humour. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4881572**

*EG send KISS12345 to 80098

All messages received £1.50. You may receive up to 4 messages for each message you send. Text STOP to 80098 to exit at any time Minimum 7 mssags must be sent before contact details can be exchanged. This service is not computer generated. Messages are responded to by realservice users. No meetings can be guaranteed. If arranging a meeting be sure to choose a public space & do not give personal details to people you have not met. Service provided by No Goats Ltd. Help tel 0207 720 7130 or email support@jmediauk.co.uk

JO 55, curvy redhead, loves eating out, theatre, travel, looking for middle-aged prince charming to sweep me off my feet. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4464905**

GENUINE lady looking for genuine male, age 58-60, for friendship and to have a laugh with. So if that's you would love to hear from you. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4537136**

PAT 66, attractive, N/S, likes reading, nights out, seeks gent for friendship, days out and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418277**

68YR old widow, attractive, seeks sincere, N/S male, likes reading, meals out and walks. West Midlands. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414773**

BROKEN hearted lady 39 seeks loving male to mend heart age 39/40. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4869116**

KAY, very young 45, fit and active, no ties, seeks similar young at heart, fun male for fun meets. Age/Status/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418577**

VIVACIOUS strawberry blonde who knows just what she wants, looking for caring male for spontaneous fun relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418445**

WENDY, 40, slim, fit, bubbly female looking to meet a tall, slim, fit, mature male who thinks he can keep up. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418369**

YOUNG early 40's female, GSOH, kind, caring, considerate, seeks male for friendship, possible romance. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 410847**

CAROL 49, attractive, green eyed blonde, honest warm hearted, n/s with GSOH likes cinema, music, walking, meals out and travel seeking similar male. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4283683**

FEMALE, 50, short blond hair, blue eyes, 5ft 10, slim build, looking for a man 50- 55 with salt and pepper hair and GSOH. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4435776**

HEATHER, 34, single very attractive brunette, sensual and interesting, looking to add to life's experiences and adventures with professional male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418193**

WENDY, 40, slim, fit, bubbly female looking to meet a tall, slim, fit, mature male who thinks he can keep up. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418369**

EILEEN, slim green eyed brunette likes meals out and cosy nights in, seeks tall male who would make her laugh and brighten up her day. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418347**

FEMALE fun brunette, attractive, 26, seeking male for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416287**

FEMALE seeking gent 55-70, down to earth, nice and intelligent who knows how to treat a lady. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417195**

Men seeking women

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

CARING male, 57, OHAC, looking for female, any race, status and age for no strings discreet fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 411461**

STEVE 39, 5ft 9ins, medium build, likes walks, seeks female, slim-medium build, single mum welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396709**

PHIL 55, divorced, 5ft 10ins, slim, OHAC, seeks female, 18 plus for discreet adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401875**

GENUINE male, 58, OHAC, looking for fun lady for no strings fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417601PHIL** 57, OHAC, discreet, seeks no strings fun with younger female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414991**

ADVENTUROUS 35yr old, slim, dark hair, likes music, cycling and photography, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417235**

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419283**

WAYNE, 40, cheeky, good career, likes gym. Looking for a lady who likes stimulating conversation and times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419829**

DARREN, 44, slim build, dark brown hair, green eyes, seeks genuine female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418809**

COLIN 48, seeks cuddly large big beautiful woman 45 to 55 for LTR, love, romance, hopefully likes cuddles, kisses, holding hands. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5308886**

52YRS old guy genuine down to earth looking for Mrs right for nights in and out, walking, cooking, lives life to the full. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5331215**

MALE looking to meet a nice lady for fun times to spend with. I am 72 and would like to meet a lady between 60 and 70. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5332896**

PHILLIP, 29 years old, 5ft 11ins, stocky build, green eyes, friendly, GSOH, seeks genuine friendly n/s female for friendship, possible relationship. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5335424**

PHIL, 58, slim, OHAC, from Wolverhampton, looking for a fun lady for a no-strings relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420265**

GENUINE 56yr old male, divorced, OHAC, looking for nice lady for friendship, maybe more. Wolverhampton. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 405551**

MALE, 70, retired from NHS, seeking a lady for friendship and companionship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420147**

WIDOWER 70 plus, seeking female for friendship. Love me love my dog. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417439**

VERY useful, attractive 58 yr old, GSOH, six foot tall, nice build, n/s, genuine, tactile, fit and sporty, looking for a women for nights in and out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420135**

TALL attractive male, 55, would like to meet older mature women 60 to 75 for close discreet fun. You only live once. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4347071**

I am an easygoing guy looking for a female 55-66 for a meaningful relationship. I am very sincere and honest. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5326234**

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

6FT well built guy, nicely groomed looking for fun intimate nights or day with slim/medium build attractive lady 35-55. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5132460**

ALAN, 56 year old builder, muscular build, five foot ten, fit, likes the gym, pubs, clubs and days out, seeks female with similar interests. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419975**

ATTRACTIVE, fit, sporty, tactile, youthful black male seek relationship with lady. N/S. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4851641**

COLIN, five foot eight, blue eyes, bundle of fun to be around, likes growing fuchsias for showing, vintage tractor for showing, weekends away, going out and staying in WLTM a lady for friendship/LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420089**

STEVE 39, 5ft 9ins, medium build, likes walks, seeks female, slim-medium build, single mum welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396709**

MARK 40, 5ft 9ins, brown hair/eyes, attractive, good looking, OHAC/business, likes walks, day trips, cinema, seeks similar female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 348239**

PROFESSIONAL male, 41, own business, likes to enjoy life, clubs, pubs, cinema, gym, seeks similar female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 360283**

GENT 55, slightly mad, but not bad, will make you glad you answered his ad! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 408973**

PAUL 50yrs, Birmingham, with own house and own car, I have a good sense of humour and I like going out, I'm looking for the right girl for friendship/relationship. Call me when you can. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418465**

WIDOWER, quiet, easygoing, slim, 5ft 7 tall, smart, varied interests, seeks slimish lady, 50 to 65 yrs for caring relationship. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4906469**

TIM, easygoing honest male, discreet, uninhibited, seeks similar non-conformist averagely attractive, N/S female up to 65. Notts. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 375065**

SUBMISSIVE 44year old WLTM dominant female 25-30 years who enjoys role play with friendship and maybe possible relationship. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5084114**

COLIN 61, lorry driver, 5'10", blue eyes, kind hearted, romantic, hobbies include growing fuchsia's for showing and I have a vintage tractor that I play with from time to time. Looking for similar who's up for a lot of fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418463**

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GENTLEMAN, 57, slightly mad but not bad, who will make you ever so glad that you answered his ad! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419307**

JAMES GSOH, likes theatre, meals out, socialising, seeking easy going female, 35-55. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417469**

PETE 47, enjoys walking, meals out, seeks female, age/looks/status unimportant, with similar interests for adult fun text only. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5063152**

MALE 60s WLTM genuine fun lady, 50/60s nights in or out, likes swimming, walks, music, good food etc for friendship or more. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4852727**

TIM, easygoing honest male, discreet, uninhibited, seeks similar non-conformist averagely attractive, N/S female up to 65. Notts. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 375065**

LEE, 50, seeking an Asian female for discreet fun and maybe more. Dudley area. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419401**

MALE 45yrs old, self-employed motor trader/mechanic, medium build, green eyes, average looks. I am a nice genuine and honest person looking for similar lady to share a honest permanent relationship and happy times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418709**

MIKE late 60's fit, active, genuine and generous, very passive seeks assertive lady any age / looks for mutual benefits. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4747481**

STOCKY, bold, unhappily married man, seeks similar very discreet female for exciting rendezvous. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4757315**

ATTRACTIVE tall black male would like to meet female for day time fun and discreet meetings, any age or location. **Text only to Mailbox no: 5077442**

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419283**

Men seeking men

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

TALL male 57, seeks older male 60 to 80 for adult fun. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4347071**

TOM young 59 attractive male, decent looking, fit, slimmish, good company & fun loving with many interests, seeking similar male. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4926340**

BI male, single widower, 58, seeks gay male friends near Tamworth. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4355756**

BI curious Gloucester guy 36, slim, married, WLTM gay or bi male aged 60 to 75 for fun times. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4930039**

BI male would like to meet same. 60 to 80 yrs. Must be able to accommodate. Coventry or Birmingham. **Text only to Mailbox no: 4931168**

Women seeking Women

ATTRACTIVE full figure bi lady 58 seeks female of similar age for fun times. Cotswold area. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4636475**

36YR attractive black curvy female seeking boyish female local for relationship. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4483526**

LONELY mother seeks female friends for enlivening/enlightening coffee chats, likes countryside animals etc. **Text only to Mailbox No: 4860241**

Friends

LUKE 60's, seeking young Asian friend, 20-30's to socialise with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414841**

CALL CHARGES*: DATING 18+ and have the bill payer's permission. 0844 calls cost 7 pence per min, 090 calls cost £1.55 per min, plus your phone company's access charge. Calls are recorded and may appear on your bill. TEXT*: Text alerts are charged at £1.50 per week. To unsubscribe to text alerts, text DATING STOP to 63333. To cancel free match alerts, text STOP to 07781474042. For full T&Cs go to www.localdates-terms.co.uk/. REPLY BY TEXT*: 80098/89990 costs £1.50 per SMS received (max 150 characters). Guaranteed up to 4 messages for each message you send, Service only available where phone icon shown. Messages are moderated. Minimum 7 messages must be sent before contact details can be exchanged. This service is not computer generated. All messages are responded to by real service users. No meetings can be guaranteed. If arranging a meeting be sure to choose a public space and do not give personal details to people you have not met. To STOP text stop to 80098/89990. Service provided by No Goats Ltd. Help: 0207 720 7130. ALL SERVICES*: By texting any shortcode you consent to the owner of that shortcode sending you the occasional marketing message. To opt out of receiving these send NO INFO to 80098. DATA PROTECTION: Service provided by JMedia UK Ltd, SW4 7BX, 0207 720 7130. We will collect the details you provide and may send you details of other services and events operated by us. We may pass your details onto this newspaper for marketing or PhonePayPlus for regulatory purposes. Advertisers may come from our national database and from our pdc app. w/c 21/12/15

Clubs are against league shake-up

A RADICAL plan to shake-up the Birmingham & District Cricket League's structure has been opposed by its clubs.

The league's management committee had put forward a proposal which would have seen the bottom division – Division Three – scrapped at the end of the 2017 season.

But it was unanimously opposed by the 12 clubs who are set to form the division next year, during a meeting held at Fordhouses Cricket Club earlier this week.

"Every team in the division has fought tooth and nail to be in the Birmingham League," explained Fordhouses skipper Chris Guest.

"It is not something we want to give up."

Under the proposals, the league would have been left with three divisions – Premier, One and Two – with the 12 clubs from Division Three being placed in their respective feeder leagues in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Dissatisfaction

It followed a recent National Playing Survey which found growing player dissatisfaction with the amount of travel and the length of the games compared to higher divisions. But Guest said: "I think the questions asked in the survey meant those kind of findings were inevitable.

"I don't know anyone who, faced with a question over whether they would like to travel less, is going to answer no.

"In reality, the travel is not a massive issue. As a club, we have aspirations of playing in the Birmingham League at a higher level – that is what we are building toward. You just have to accept the travel as part of it all.

"In terms of reducing it or increasing the competitiveness of the league, I don't see how removing a division changes that.

"You are always going to have players at a lower level being paid by the clubs. That is just how things are." The issue will now be discussed by the league's management committee.

Hero Ashley set for big return to club

CRADLEY'S 2013 title hero Ashley Morris will make a sensational return to the club in 2016.

The Penkridge-born youngster captained the Heathens to an unforgettable clean sweep of honours before departing ahead of 2014.

However, he has failed to secure an Elite League or Premier League team spot ahead of next season, opening the door for him to return to the National League.

Morris, 21, admits there was only one club for him once it became clear he would need to step back down to the third tier.

After enjoying four memorable seasons in green, red and white, he is delighted to be back ahead of the new campaign.

With ambitions of securing a team spot at a higher level later in the season, Morris is desperate to pick up where he left off as one of the National League's top riders.

And he is eyeing another dominant season for Will Pottinger's side as they look to regain the league title from local rivals Birmingham.

Brilliant

"I'm really looking forward to being back at Cradley," Morris said. "Over the years they've taught me a lot and I've had some great times riding for the Heathens, so it's brilliant to be back.

"There was only one place I was going to consider if I was going to go back to the National League, so I'm happy they've given me the chance to ride for them again.

"It's a shame I couldn't get a Premier League team place, and some of the new rules haven't worked in my favour and have possibly squeezed me out a little.

"I still want to stay on the bike and get as much track time as I can, so being back at Cradley is a good move for me at the moment.

"It was a no-brainer as soon as I spoke to them, and I'm excited to get back to wearing a Heathens race jacket. Hopefully things can carry on the way they were in 2013, that was a great season for me and the club.

"It's obviously going to be tough for us to replicate that success, but that's what we are aiming for and I'm hoping I can have another good season personally to help make sure we do well."

Morris joins Max Clegg and Bradley Andrews in an impressive-looking Heathens side so far with the action starting next March back at Monmore Green.

Meanwhile British Speedway's National League will welcome two new clubs in 2016.

The sport will return to the Isle of Wight's Smallbrook Stadium after a two-year absence with the newly branded Warriors.

And Belle Vue will enter a Colts team into the third tier based at their new home, the National Speedway Stadium in Manchester. The news means 12 clubs will come to the tapes next season in what promises to be an exciting time for the league which encourages the development of young British riders.

Club bosses held their AGM at the British Speedway HQ in Warwickshire on Wednesday and they set a new team building limit of 40-points per club. They have also scrapped all tactical rides – and the league title will revert to the play-off system.

Together again: 2013 title-winning captain Ashley Morris and current skipper Max ClegG. *Picture: John Hipkiss*

Two brought in as Tivs looking to boost ranks

TIVIDALE have given their survival hopes a boost with the capture of two signings who the club hopes with strengthen the team at both ends.

Forward Jazz Luckie returns for what will be his second spell with the club.

And former Halesowen Town defender Sam Brooks will also be joing the line up from Sutton Coldfield Town.

Luckie played at Tividale last season and has since had a couple of spells at Stafford Rangers but will be looking to settle into his second spell.

He scored a vital goal for table-topping Boro as they were 1-0 winners at Gresley in late October.

The pacy striker has also played for Chasetown.

He left Neil Kitching's Rangers in November before spending a few weeks at Romulus.

Joint Tividale bosses Ross Thorpe and Phil Male also moved to bring in defender Brooks from Halesowen.

He has played for Barwell, Coalville Town and Rushall Olympic.

Luckie will look to add more goals and join the likes of Chris Sterling, who has notched 13 goals and Malachi Farquharson, who has four goals.

Tividale's quest to move from the bottom of the Evo-Stik First Division South was dealt a blow as last Saturday's match at Gresley fell foul of the weather.

But they have a chance to pick up a first win since September 26 at home to Daventry Town this Saturday.

They are currently five points from safety.

Gabby's days at Villa look numbered

GABBY AGBONLAHOR'S days at Villa could be numbered with the club open to offers for the 29-year-old forward in January.

The club captain hasn't scored for nine months and didn't feature in the squad for their defeat against Arsenal.

Agbonlahor has struggled to impress new manager Remi Garde and if the Frenchman receives the right offer, Villa's longest-serving player looks likely to be out of the door.

After coming through the youth ranks, Agbonlahor made his debut for Villa in 2006 at the age of 19.

He won three England caps in 2008 and 2009. But the striker's goals have dried up recently. He's only scored 10 goals in the last two-and-a-half seasons.

He's picked up more yellow cards in that time.

Convincing points win for fighter Gelder

COSELEY'S Jamie Gelder scored a convincing points win fighting overseas under the Malta Boxing Commission banner.

Gelder featured at light heavyweight on a show at the Aria Complex in the Maltese town of San Gwann recently, *writes Craig Birch*.

And 'Danger' proved trouble for debutant Goran Bogdanovic in the home corner, winning all four rounds comprehensively over-the-distance.

The 23-year-old set a fast pace and forced his opponent onto the back-foot, with Bogdanovic enjoying his best spells of pressure against the ropes.

That was when he could back Gelder up and let rip with fast and furious combinations of his own, although he couldn't save the result.

All three judges all ruled in favour of Gelder, Nick Aish and Stephen Farrugia by 40-36 landslide while Gwayn Bonsfield had it 39-37.

It tidies his pro record up to three wins from nine bouts, having lost six straight contests since his hand was last raised in September 2014.

It was his first outing since he was outpointed by Liam Milner in Liverpool three months ago, with his two KO defeats coming last winter.

Alex Hughes and Luke Crowcroft both stopped him in the the first round, although he cried foul through injury and low blows.

His luck first took a turn for the worst after he was outpointed by Mike Byles, the two points he had deducted for holding costing him a draw.

Youngster is learning lots from Saido

ALBION academy striker Tahvon Campbell 'loves' playing alongside Saido Berahino in the under-21s.

The 18-year-old opened the scoring in a 3-0 win over Swansea under-21s recently, pouncing on a blocked Berahino shot before coolly tucking the ball in.

He then repaid the favour to last season's top scorer, winning a penalty in the 80th minute, which Berahino converted.

Campbell played as an out-and-out striker while Berahino dropped deeper into a number 10 role, and the youngster enjoyed linking up with the senior player.

"He's got lots of experience," said Campbell. "I just love playing with him and learning from him. He helps me a lot."

The young forward has a frightening turn of pace.

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Sport

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Sidelined Afobe has been a pro

BENCHED Wolves star Benik Afobe has been praised for his professionalism by boss Kenny Jackett – who revealed no club has made an inquiry to buy the striker in the January transfer window.

Afobe has been on the bench for the last two matches with Adam Le Fondre preferred up front.

That has stoked speculation that the 22-year-old is set to leave Molineux in January.

But Jackett said no discussions had taken place over the former Arsenal man's future.

"There have been no offers or approaches from any clubs," he said. "Until that happens, nothing happens.

"Should it build up like last time (in the summer) we'll have to see.

"As it stands there's nobody making any inquiries, it's all quiet on that front.

"No we haven't had any conversations on Benik, other than on making sure he scores goals and plays well.

"In terms of anybody coming in for him, if and when it happens we'll discuss it then."

Premier League strugglers Norwich City lodged three bids for Afobe in the summer, the highest being £10m.

And Steve McClaren's Newcastle United are also believed to have closely tracked the striker, who was the country's joint-top goalscorer with 32 strikes last season.

His form this campaign hasn't been as prolific with Afobe scoring eight in 22 appearances.

And despite being surprisingly dropped, Jackett said Afobe had shown an exemplary attitude in training.

"He hasn't thrown his toys out of the pram at all," Jackett said.

"He's been working hard, again trained hard and well, and scored goals in training which is good."

Walsall are in talks with O'Driscoll over manager role

WALSALL have spoken at length with managerial front-runner Sean O'Driscoll.

A poll revealed 77 per cent of supporters who answered back a move for the Wolverhampton-born former Liverpool assistant manager to take over at the Banks's.

However, it is understood that while O'Driscoll remains keen on the job, negotiations are not yet as advanced as simply thrashing out the finer details of a contract.

Sources say O'Driscoll, who has an impressive managerial CV with the likes of Doncaster Rovers and Nottingham Forest, wants to ensure he will be given full backing as he attempts to further Saddlers' bid for promotion to the Championship.

It is believed former boss Dean Smith and his assistant Richard O'Kelly recommended O'Driscoll to the Walsall board before the pair departed for Brentford.

And O'Driscoll is understood to want to formulate a strategy to build on Smith's work at the Banks's and gain promotion from League One.

Jonas is hoping for a Euro reunion

Football

JONAS OLSSON and James McClean hope the Swede's impressive performances will set up a Euro 2016 reunion between the two team-mates.

Olsson's Sweden and McClean's Ireland have been drawn together in Group E for next year's competition in France.

The big Swede was a colossus at Anfield recently and capped off a fine defensive display with a goal in the 73rd minute.

But the big centre-half was left out of the Swedish squad for their European Championship play-off games against Denmark.

In fact he's only made one appearance for his country since July 2013, playing the full 90 minutes in an international friendly against Norway in June this year.

"I was in the Euros four years ago and even if we didn't do as well as we hoped for, it was definitely the greatest few weeks of my career," said Olsson. "I really want to go again in the summer. Hopefully I do enough this season to be part of the team."

Sweden's first match is against the Republic of Ireland in the 81,000-seater Stade de France. The game is already being touted as a must-win for both sides because the other two countries in their group are world number one-ranked side Belgium, and traditional powerhouse Italy.

"It's going to be a big one," admitted Olsson. "That's what it's about. Rise to the occasion. It's what you dreamt about as a little boy, to play the biggest stadiums in championships like that."

Olsson has won 25 caps for Sweden.

Like many international fringe players, this season has added importance for the Swede with the championships in France looming . Olsson is 33 in March, and might not get another opportunity to reach a major tournament.

A TRIBUTE TO LEGEND RON

A 'FITTING honour to an icon of Wolverhampton Wanderers' is how the club have described the decision to name Ron Flowers as a Wolves vice-president.

The legendary former player was part of Wolves' three title-winning squads in 1953/54, 1957/58 and 1958/59, won the FA Cup in 1960 and was part of England's 1966 World Cup-winning squad.

In total he won 49 caps for his country and now joins Steve Bull, Robert Plant and Baroness Rachael Heyhoe Flint as vice-presidents at Molineux.

The 81-year-old spoke of his delight at receiving the honorary role.

He said: "It was a lovely surprise for me and my family – I hadn't got a clue about it although I'm very proud and pleased to accept this great honour.

"I've got such a deep bond with the club and it's been such a big part of my life for so many years.

"I'm already privileged to be the president of the Wolves Former Players Association, but this latest honour strengthens my connections even more.

Village

"I was born and brought up in a little Yorkshire village but my roots have been firmly in this area since I arrived here all those years ago."

Flowers played 512 times for Wolves, scoring 37 goals, in a 15-year career at Molineux.

In 2009 he was finally awarded a World Cup winners' medal after an FA campaign, and it is now on show in the Wolves Museum. Flowers was close to featuring in the final in 1966.

"Jackie Charlton was suffering from a cold and Sir Alf (Ramsey) put me on standby," he said. "But I knew it would take more than a cold to stop Jackie so it wasn't such a let-down the next morning when I knew that I wouldn't be playing.

"There have been greater players than me who have never got near to a World Cup final and although I didn't get to play, it was a privilege to be involved and in the company of such household names.

"I have some wonderful memories from football and the news that I am am to be a vice-president at Wolves has added to the list. I am very grateful."

After a short spell in management with Telford United, who he guided to the FA Trophy final, he resigned in 1971 to open a sports shop in Wolverhampton, which still stands in Queen Street to this day, although Flowers doesn't frequent it quite as often as he used to.

"Fans were always dropping in for a chat, which was great," Flowers added. "Well I had been a local lad since the early 50s. Glenn (Ron's son) just helped in the early days but he has gone on to run the place now." Chief executive Jez Moxey said: "I think it is a fitting honour to an icon of Wolverhampton Wanderers.

"Ron was with the club through the glory years of the fifties when he won league and cup honours as well as playing a huge part in the floodlit friendlies that heralded European competition.

"His contribution for his country shouldn't go unnoticed either. For Wolves and England Ron Flowers was a model professional and his is a name that will live long in the annals of the club's history."

Ron Flowers and Sophie Cawthorne showing Ron Flowers World Cup winning medal

Grapplers grab medals from contest

WRESTLERS are celebrating after striking gold, silver and bronze in their final competition of the year.

Ten wrestlers from Wolverhampton Wresting Club, which runs classes at the Guru Nanak Satsang Sikh Gurdwara on Cannock Road, headed to the recent Derbyshire Open, returning with an impressive haul of two gold, four silver and two bronze medals.

Club owner and coach Ranjit Singh, said: "We were thrilled to see members come back with medals. As a coach it is incredibly rewarding to see our wrestlers succeeding.

"They came back and showed their medals to all the juniors – it was great for them to see that if you work hard you can achieve your goals."

The Derbyshire Open attracts some of the best junior and senior wrestlers from around the country, with Wolverhampton entering wrestlers of all abilities and ages.

Their youngest competitor was six-year-old Ishmael Brown, who took a silver medal in the 21kg Junior Division, while his father Nathaniel took gold in the 80kg in the Senior Division.

Singh added: "It was Ishmael's first competition, so we expected him to be nervous, yet he was the most popular guy at the contest, he just threw himself into everything."

Grappler Edward James also came away from his first competition with a bronze medal in the 88kg weight category in the Senior Division.

Wolverhampton Wrestling Club has been running since the 1980s and has produced some of the country's best wrestlers, including two Olympians.

Singh hopes some of his current charges will make it through to the 2018 Commonwealth Games.Visit www.wolverhamptonwrestlingclub.co.uk

Things are going right for Iorfa

DOMINIC IORFA has hailed Wolves' recent defensive improvements – and says he is enjoying his blossoming right-wing partnership with James Henry.

The 20-year-old recently signed a new contract which ties him to the club until 2019.

And Iorfa said confidence was high in the squad despite more points being dropped at home to Nottingham Forest on Friday, ahead of another televised game against Leeds at Molineux tonight.

"It was definitely two points dropped," he said of the game.

"We were in control of the game for such a long period."

★★★

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